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COMBING THE CARIBBEES

BY HARRY L. FOSTER

THE ADVENTURES OF A TROPICAL TRAMP
A BEACHCOMBER IN THE ORIENT
A GRINGO IN MANANA-LAND
A TROPICAL TRAMP WITH THE TOURISTS
A VAGABOND IN FIJI
IF YOU GO TO SOUTH AMERICA
THE CARIBBEAN CRUISE
COMBING THE CARIBBEES



Courtesy of Publishers' Photo Service

Mademoiselle from Martinique

COMBINING THE CARIBBEES

BY HARRY L. FOSTER



With Illustrations

New York
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1929

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CHAPTER I

GENESIS

I

PERHAPS I should commence this tale with somewhat more of a flourish.

With a word or two on the lure of strange lands, the romance of palms and coral isles, the thrill of exotic adventure.

Only, when the trip began, there was little glamour about it. I had always thought of the West Indies as much too close to home to hold much fascination. They were probably nice enough in their way—excellent resorts in which to escape the northern winter or the rigors of prohibition—but certainly they held little appeal to any one who had travelled the rest of the globe, explored the Amazon, dined with South Sea Island cannibals, or worshipped in Siamese temples.

It was a former classmate, now in Haiti, who first suggested the voyage.

“You won’t be bored,” he promised, when I met him during one of his brief vacations. “Of course, if you make a winter cruise with a gang of tourists, you’ll find the West Indies as formal and as much exploited as the Grand Cañon or Niagara Falls. But there are still plenty of places, just off the beaten trail, where you’ll find all

sorts of local color. You come down to Haiti, and spend a few months with me in the hills, and you'll get a story. We still have devils down there—devils, and spirits, and witches. You'll go to sleep at night to the throb of African drums—Congo drums, maybe voodoo drums. I've rambled a bit myself, since I got my commission in the navy, but the funniest place and the queerest place in the whole wide world is Haiti, just five days' sail from home."

II

Wherefore, when I sailed last winter, my ultimate objective was Haiti.

But I did not aim directly for that island. I had contracted with my publisher to do a guidebook on the West Indies—a chatty and casual sort of volume, but one for conventional travellers. And on my way to Port-au-Prince, I had planned to visit briefly the several islands which I had not seen before—those tiny little Lesser Antilles which begin on the eastern side of Porto Rico and sweep in a graceful curve to the upper righthand edge of the South American continent.

It would be an efficient, business-like trip—by one line to Trinidad—thence by another to Venezuela and Curacao—and thus to Port-au-Prince. There would be little time for pleasure or frivolity. In my steamship cabin, as we left New York, I unpacked a portable typewriter, arranged in a neat row across my bunk the several histories and reference volumes which were to provide me

with statistics, and draped the wall with maps and charts of the Caribbean Sea.

But there's something in the lilt of the ocean which upsets ambitious programs. Each morning a breeze came up from the south with a balmier, warmer caress. The ocean took on a deeper blue; it became impossibly azure. Sargasso weed floated idly past from the tropics down below. And all too soon the islands appeared—*islands and islands and islands*.

St. Thomas, the chief of the Virgin group, came up one day with the sunrise—a chaos of dull green rugged peaks inclosing a deep lagoon. At its wharf the women coaled our ship, marching aboard with baskets of fuel which matched their own complexions. The menfolk mostly lolled in the shade, to hail us with a chorus:

"I beg you for one penny, sah! I asking you t'row a penny."

Then came St. Croix, a cane-covered isle that gleamed like bronze in the sunset. And Saba, cone-shaped, sombre black against a rising moon. . . . The shadows passed of other isles as we steamed on toward the Leewards. . . . In the eddy sweeping past our bilge, strange green-gold lanterns danced; the waves that rose from our speeding prow were aglow with phosphorescence; behind us we left a widening wake of sparkling liquid fire.

Each day we stopped at some little port more quaint than those before. There was old St. Kitts, where the darkies came out in gayly-painted rowboats.

"I say, baas! Hi, you, baas! You going shoreward,

sah?" Their accents were most decidedly English, but the grammar was their own. "I glad for taking you in my boad. Dis boad, she name *Carmania!*"

Nevis slipped by, its one great cone embalmed in fleecy clouds. Thereafter Redonda, Montserrat, and finally Antigua. Islands asleep among their palms, somnolent and tranquil, basking no doubt in dreams of the past, when they rang to the tread of pirates. But to-day they were tranquil, turquoise gems upon an emerald sea. The little old fort at each harbor-front was ungarrisoned and empty. The spirit of peace which pervaded them now quite shamed the hurrying traveler. How could one rush through places like these in pursuit of guidebook data?

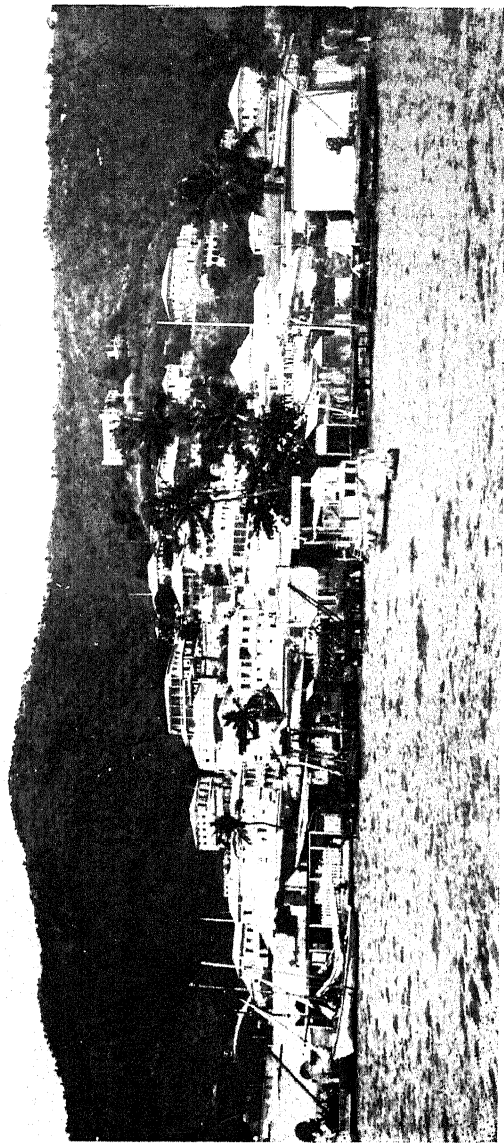
III

I developed some sort of a complex.

These were *not* over-advertised tourist resorts, these queer little scarce-known islands. Close as they might be to Times Square and Broadway, they were as unchanged by modernity as the Amazon, or the South Sea Islands, or Siam. I decided to stop off, and rest a while in one of them. And when we anchored off Guadeloupe, the impulse took definite form.

"I'm going to land," I told the purser, "to wait here for your next boat."

"Oh, no, sir," he said, "you can't do that. *This* island is French, you know. They're sometimes very fussy indeed, and you're booked for Trinidad. You can go ashore for an hour or two, if you wish to see the sights, but



Courtesy of Hamburg-American Line

"St. Thomas, of the Virgin Group, came up one day with the sunrise"

if they saw you bringing luggage along, they'd ask for a visaed passport. And as to waiting for our next ship—"

I paused to hear no more.

This was the most entrancing isle encountered on our voyage. And its queer little town—it was called Basse Terre—looked every bit as ancient as the blue-green hills behind it. The rudely and roughly cobbled streets all sloped to central gutters, through each of which there flowed a stream from the heights above the city. The houses, erratic and askew, were trimmed in gaudy colors. And everywhere were garden walls, great massive Seventeenth Century walls, embroidered with fern and lichen, above which towered stately palms, cocoanuts and royals.

The people, too, were more picturesque than those of previous islands. There were darkies here who might have stepped from the pages of Uncle Tom's cabin. Venerable mammies who smoked clay pipes with an almost queenly grace. French officers in white sun-helmets; black soldiers in bright red pants. And many tall, stately *creole* girls, dressed after the fashion of the Empress Josephine in neighboring Martinique. Their flowing robes outshone the gayest rainbow; they wore huge pendants in their ears; on their heads, piratical turbans.

It was a setting from the Arabian Nights, with a dark-skinned Ziegfeld chorus!

And behind it rose the hills—those blue-green, wonderful hills—splotted with the scarlet of blossoming flamboyants, fading to purple in the distance as the peaks

merged to rear themselves aloft in one great massive mountain, the cone of volcanic Soufrière. One felt the lure of a strange new land, the thrill of exotic adventure! And I walked on inland toward those hills, to let my steamer sail. I had money enough to last two weeks, and scarcely needed baggage. The guidebook work could wait a bit while I played at Robinson Crusoe.

CHAPTER II

ASHORE AT GUADELOUPE

I

ON several occasions in a somewhat vagrant past I had been stranded in foreign ports, and was quite accustomed to it.

I endeavored, of course, to make a pretense of dismay for the benefit of any immigration officials who might be interested, rushing to the wharf and waving frantically at the departing ship. But inwardly I rejoiced, and having given a brief imitation of a distracted Robinson Crusoe, I set out blithely to find a lodging house.

This introduced an unexpected problem.

In the first place, as I soon discovered, I'd forgotten a lot of French. So, also, had the local negroes. Their speech, although based originally upon this language, had deteriorated into a strangely-garbled *patois* which might have baffled even a student from the Sorbonne.

My efforts at conversation, following that histrionic performance at the pier, served mainly to draw a fascinated throng of colored folk, who surrounded me to gape in pop-eyed enjoyment. They were not deliberately impolite. They simply were less accustomed than most islanders to the visits of American tourists. They listened with child-like curiosity, as though it had never

before occurred to them that any speech existed save their own *creole* dialect. They commented upon me among themselves, and burst into deep-lunged roars of infantile merriment.

It was not long before a *gendarme* pushed his way into our midst, a darkie who looked the darker in his snow-white uniform and sun-helmet, to transfix me with a baneful scowl. Apparently I was disturbing the peace or something, but explanations were difficult. The few French verbs which leaped to my mind from a long-past college course—*J'aime, tu aimes, il aime, nous aimons, vous aimez, ils aiment*—were woefully inadequate.

I had begun to entertain visions of lodging at governmental expense, when like a *deus ex machina* a huge and massive colored lady elbowed her way into the throng, and thrust the *gendarme* unceremoniously aside. She was of a type distinct from the others. The Guadeloupians, in general, were tall and rather slender. This particular Amazon was not only tall, but also wide, and especially impressive in the third dimension.

"Say," I blurted in desperation. "Do *you* happen to speak English?"

"Honey," she said, "tha's what Ah don' do nothin' else but. You-all jes' come along with Vinita."

II

By birth, it developed, Vinita was from Dominica, the neighboring British island, but had once been to New Orleans, where—perhaps from reading Octavus Roy Co-

hen—she had learned to speak the negro dialect correctly.

Furthermore, except for a local white cable-operator—whom I had yet to discover—she was the only person in Basse-Terre with whom I could converse. So, hoping that her intentions might prove honorable, or at least remote, I accepted her escort, and followed her to a lodging-house at which she served as cook.

It was little more than a restaurant, or perhaps “eating-place” would better describe it, but its buxom French proprietress had an extra room to let.

How much?

She regarded me appraisingly, and finally said, “*Trente francs.*” Thirty of anything sounded most appalling. But translated into American dollars at the current rate of exchange, thirty francs proved to be little more than \$1.20 a day, including not only room and board, but also wine with meals. Wherefore, rejoicing, I followed Vinita up a rickety stairway to my future abode.

It was a bare and tiny coop, furnished with true French thrift. There was a sagging bed, a chair of sorts, and a diminutive table containing a leaky wash-basin and a candle which sagged in its holder like the leaning tower of Pisa. The guest who craved such luxury was supposed to bring his own soap. The walls, save for a faded chromo of Sarah Bernhardt, were decorated mostly with spider-webs, and as Vinita straightened the window curtain, a six inch centipede took to flight, running swiftly over the floor, elongating and contracting his mottled

greenish-yellow body as he darted about in search of refuge.

Furthermore, this particular apartment had not been intended originally as a guest-room. It was in reality a passageway, with one door opening upon the kitchen stairs and another upon the balcony which led to other apartments. The occupant was expected to leave both doors open to facilitate the passing of the servants, and passing was their particular specialty.

They quite outnumbered the lodgers, and with Vinita as their grand marshal, trooped back and forth throughout the day. *Her* tread was easily recognizable. Although she might not have been more than forty, she was exceedingly large for her age—so large that one wondered how she had attained such proportions in anything less than a century—and she was also amazingly active. She tore wildly down the corridor with a BANG, BANG, BANG of thunderous bare heels, and would come streaking through my quarters without regard to my state of dress, or even for my lack of it.

“Don’ you-all mind, honey,” she reassured me. “Ah’m not like these *creole* women. Ah’m a mos’ respectable girl.”

But all this, perhaps was to be accepted as “local color.” From the balcony one could look across the jumble of roofs and moss-grown garden walls to the distant tropic hills. And the courtyard below was thronged with the merriest of natives—natives who babbled eternally in their funny creole jargon, bursting ever and anon into epi-

demics of laughter which rose in swelling crescendo to prolonged, interminable shrieks.

III

In my memory of Guadeloupe, it is this laughter which stands out most vividly and distinctly.

Darkies may giggle and cackle in other lands, but not as in Basse Terre. One found the unrestrained gaiety here that comes only with true French freedom, and if the populace guffawed annoyingly at a strange visitor, he soon found consolation in the discovery that they likewise guffawed at one another.

The streets about my hotel were constantly lined with doorway loungers, who gossiped with those across the way or joshed the passing pedestrian. To stroll the cobbled highway was to run the gauntlet of incessant repartee. But to this the pedestrians were accustomed, and they seemed themselves to enjoy it. Even our local bicyclist, a long, lean colored gentleman who apparently had dedicated his life to bumping furiously over the rough stones in a determined effort to hurdle the central gutter, would pick himself from the muddy water in which he invariably landed, and would join heartily in the howls of mirth which greeted each mishap.

It was the women, however, who gave Basse Terre its gaiety, and also its picturesqueness.

Here or there one saw a chic and petite *mademoiselle* of a shade that might have been sunburn, a short-skirted,

silk-stockinged little maid who suggested Parisian boulevards. Oftener one noted the ebony-hued belle, plump and rather flat-nosed, whose pale blue cotton gown accentuated the blackness of her bare and ample feet. But the prevailing type—the true French Island *creole* in the garb of the Empress Josephine—was a creature distinctly apart.

In complexion she was fairly light—often high yellow or *cafe-au-lait* or sometimes even pink. Her skin was of finer texture than that of most mulattos; it had a fineness much like that of the Hindus from the East. Her features, too, were clearly defined, and sometimes rather pretty. She walked with a long, free, swinging stride, her head most proudly erect. This came no doubt from the local custom of carrying all burdens atop one's woolly pate, yet it gave her an air of majesty which a princess might have envied.

Her mother and grandmother, one noted, were apt to be somewhat darker, yet they, too, had a poise. They alone seemed uninterested in a strange visitor, as though vulgar curiosity were beneath them. But they dressed as gaudily as did their daughters, in pendants and turbans and flowing robes that fell from neck to ankles in explosions of lurid color.

In contrast, the men of Guadeloupe appeared dull, sombre, lifeless objects. They seldom walked with a swinging stride, but ambled like slow-motion pictures, pushing forward their gawky knees as a prelude to each step, and zigzagging uncertainly from curb to curb as though they

were slightly puzzled as to where they were going or why. Most of them chose the street for their thoroughfare, and few attempted to use the narrow sidewalk, since sooner or later it was certain to be blocked by a lethargic gentleman who'd given up trying to go anywhere at all and had succumbed to complete inertia.

In the cane-fields back of town they might occasionally accept employment, but in the town itself it was the women who did most of the work, travelling daily to market beneath huge baskets of produce. The principal market-place was situated in the suburbs, out beyond a venerable gray cathedral and across a quaint-arched bridge that spanned a foaming river. Down below, as one crossed that bridge, one caught a glimpse of the local wash-ladies, stripped unconcernedly to the waist, their bronze bodies gleaming in the sunlight as they belabored garments upon the convenient rocks. But the great excitement lay in the mart, where barter and gossip thrived.

Some attempt to beautify the square was evident in the old fountain which graced its center, but the cupids had all turned green, and the water, instead of spouting from the top, gushed from a pipe at the bottom, where it served the more utilitarian purpose of cooling dusty bare feet. The marketers themselves showed a Latin artistic sense in the arrangement of their wares, piling mangos or breadfruit in neat little pyramids, laying out their tiny fish in even, military rows, or tying the carrots and bananas together in strings of three and standing them up in tripods. But with this, all order ceased. The swarm

of humanity milled and eddied, examining, comparing, bargaining, and the voices rose in another babble that made the welkin writhe.

It was here that the housewives met, both to replenish the larder and to exchange the news of the day. There were shops, of course, tiny coops in the basement of every building, but these were dingy and poorly stocked, and they assumed their only activity along toward night-fall, when their proprietors closed them with a tremendous banging of heavy doors and a clamorous rattling of locks and chains, as though each were meticulously safeguarding vast fortunes in silver and jewels.

Then, with basements barred and shuttered, the narrow alleys of Basse Terre became deep-walled, gloomy caverns, and the street-lamps, dim and widely spaced, glowed feebly through the dusk. Yet the lanes were by no means deserted. A shuffle of feet still echoed over the mossy cobbles as men and women paraded, peculiarly intent; the creole girls went flitting about in search of transient mates; couples spooned openly on the curb, indifferent to observers; from many a window came the blare of music, of accordions or guitars, and one caught a glimpse of dancing figures as blacks cavorted with octoroons, and gallant French officers whirled the floor with gay young colored maids.

"Prenez vous garde!" my landlady warned, and shook a sly finger at me. *"Les creoles, elles sont dangereux! Prenez vous garde, monsieur!"*

But if sinless folk existed here, they seemed to cast

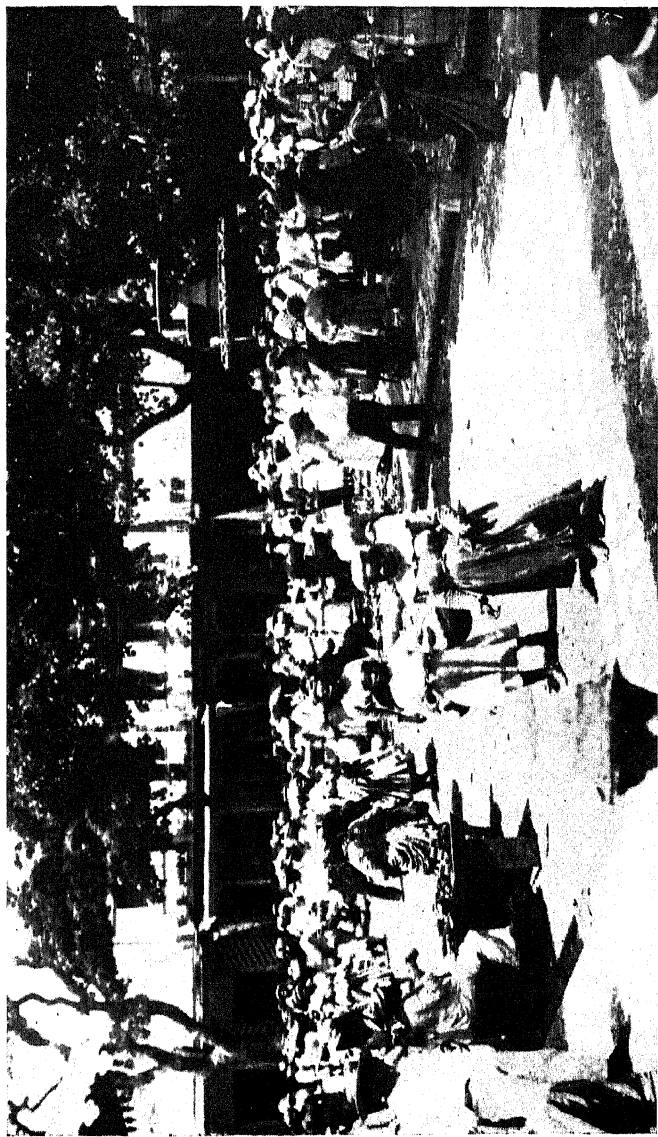


Photo from Ewing Galloway

“Here the housewives met, both to replenish the larder, and to exchange the news of the day”

no stones. One heard only the murmur of many voices—music—peals of laughter.

IV

I stood on my balcony that first night, feeling pleased with the place of my exile.

One could not have found a more colorful spot for this brief two weeks' vacation. The French could scarcely put me off until another steamer called. And with the cost of living so very cheap—

"I beg your pardon. You're the chap who landed to-day?"

I turned, a trifle startled at the voice. But it was merely that local cable-operator—the town's lone Briton—a pleasant and rather affable man, who had come to make my acquaintance. His presence at once reminded me that I had a message to send:

PURSER S.S. FORT ST. GEORGE

STOPPING IN GUADELOUPE. LEAVE CHECKS AND
BAGGAGE IN TRINIDAD. WILL FOLLOW TO RETRIEVE
THEM ON NEXT FORTNIGHTLY BOAT. FOSTER.

"I'll send it," he said, "but don't you know, there's no *next* fortnightly boat?"

"Huh?"

"In winter they do run every two weeks, but yours was the last of the season. So, unless you *swim* to Trinidad, you may be here for six months."

CHAPTER III

MAROONED IN BASSE TERRE

I

IF there's anything that tends to lessen the attractiveness of a place, it's the news that one *has* to stay there.

It made Basse Terre a jail.

In the popular tourist season, mid-winter, a big cruise-ship *might* have dropped in unexpectedly. In early spring no one could predict when another boat would call. The postmaster announced no outbound mails until he saw a vessel, while even the agents of cargo lines could offer no information. And whereas on my first day it had been my great desire to get *on* the island, my ambition thereafter was to get *off*.

Each morning, with decreasing funds and growing consternation, I plodded from my lodgings to the harbor to stare at a vacant sea, until I came to know every cobble in that rudely-cobbled street. To the bare, prehensile native toes, the rounded, mossy stones scarcely presented a problem. My own progress, in unyielding leather across the slippery rocks, was cumbersome and cautious, and for the many loafers along the way it provided much amusement.

They filled the doorways as I passed, and festooned

themselves from the balconies. Michelin, a plump and rosy-hued *creole* girl who lived next door, would shriek with laughter at me. She was the neighborhood wit; when I paused to glare at her, she might retreat up the alley, but her merriment still resounded from within; and sooner or later she was certain to reappear, with some new remarks wherewith to convulse the others.

Perhaps she was not unfriendly. It seemed the custom of most passers-by, of either sex, to pause at her doorstep as they passed, and greet her with a brief and fairly circumspect kiss, as though they were paying toll. But even the repartee which had so intrigued me at first as indicative of the town's prevailing good nature soon became annoying. To a white man, accustomed to life in foreign lands where his complexion at once raises him to the eminence of a little tin god, it was humiliating to find one's self the butt for a dark people's humor and there were times when I longed to pet Michelin myself—with a good stout Irish shilaleh.

Basse Terre, however, was by no means an ideal place in which to start a race riot. There was simply no color line here. The French, always more chummy with their wards than other Europeans, accorded the natives a very full measure of the *liberté, égalité, and fraternité* promised in the national motto. The Governor, who came from France, might hold himself aloof, but his exclusiveness was purely social, and he "high hatted" the negroes no more than he did the white officials of lesser rank than himself. The natives not only elected most of their local

office-holders, but sent black deputies to Paris. And no matter how annoying the banter might prove, one had to grin and bear it.

II

One had also to bear Vinita.

From the moment of my arrival that dusky Amazon assumed toward me a protective attitude which presently became both irritating and embarrassing.

As my only available interpreter—the cable man being occupied usually at his keys—she insisted upon accompanying me wherever I went. If I tried to slip out unnoticed, she was certain to hear of it, and to follow, and no sooner had I paused to bargain with a shop-keeper over some trifling purchase than she would materialize from the ether, like some evil genii, to leap into the fray and bargain in my behalf.

It began to look as though we were keeping steady company. This probably would have provoked little censorious comment in Basse Terre, where the view on miscegenation was extremely broad. But Vinita, it must be remembered, was no sylph-like South Sea Island maiden with a pandanus blossom in her hair, such as one encounters so frequently in romantic tropical fiction, and the terms of endearment in which she frequently addressed me had, I thought, a distinctly ominous sound.

Protests brought little satisfaction.

"But you-all know Ah'm not like dese odder girls here! Ah'm a mos' *respectable* lady!"

Which may have been the case. But I was beginning to doubt the altruism of her efforts to keep local merchants from obtaining more than their due share of my limited money. For although she would fight like a tigress when some one else sought to over-charge me, she soon revealed the ulterior motive by attempting to borrow a bit herself. This usually was in the guise of obtaining special delicacies for my table.

"Now I go to buy some food for you an' cook you special nice dinner."

Whenever I paid the requested advance, the dinner was certain to be late. The bevy of Guadeloupian servants—merry young *creole* girls who bore the musical names of Coralline, Honorine, and Azaline—would meticulously set the several tables. Upon each red-checked cover the knives and forks were laid out at precise intervals, promising by their numbers that a nine-course banquet was to follow. But even the hoped-for guests failed to appear. Idlers might gather at the large windows which opened directly upon the sidewalk—principally for the purpose of flirting with the Misses Coraline, Honorine, and Azaline—but Guadeloupe either was not addicted to dining out, or else had learned by patronizing this establishment in the past that man can not live by cutlery alone.

Madame X——, the buxom proprietress, seldom concerned herself with these minor problems of her *menage*,

but liked to pore over the weighty ledger in which she balanced her accounts. She was of rather sallow complexion, despite her ample girth, and long residence in the tropics had predisposed her to vague but chronic ailments. She usually spent her evenings in a corner of her room before a small group of plaster saints, apparently preparing herself for a pleasanter life in the future, and my daily inquiry as to her health always elicited the same patient reply:

"Souffrante, monsieur. Un peu souffrante. Toujours je suis souffrante."

But Vinita seemed healthy enough. Where the dickens was she? Impatiently I would pace the floor, consulting my watch—the only thing in Basse Terre that seemed to run on time—vowing vengeance upon the massive Dominican. For it developed that she was addicted to her rum, and when entrusted with any cash, was apt to loiter on the way. When eventually she did show up, she would be prepared to sing, dance, turn summersaults, or lead in prayer. But in justice to her, it must be admitted that she always remembered to bring me something to eat.

This was usually a fish.

Not a plain fish, by any means, but one of gorgeous coloring. Sometimes she would bring it up raw to my room to point out its prismatic splendor.

"Ah selec' that there fish myself," she would proclaim, proudly. "I buy that jes' for you, honey."

Privately I assumed at first that she did it to please

her own barbaric love of color. (She herself habitually wore a vivid scarlet dress and a bright yellow turban which elicited much attention from the larger bucks in our neighborhood.) But upon investigation at the market, I later discovered that the pink, green, and gold fish, despite their decorative merit, were far less palatable than those of more modest hue, and could be purchased more cheaply.

Also, no matter how resplendent the fish might originally be, it had lost all personality by the time it reached the table swimming in yellow grease. Despite the justly great reputation of most *creole* cooking, Vinita's left much to be desired. Rice was our staple, appearing first in soup, later as a vegetable (also swimming in yellow grease), and finally as dessert. "Beef" was something of an event and heralded with considerable furor. "Ox," I think, would have more accurately described it. Vinita invariably announced, as was her wont, that she had bought it just for me. But no matter how much advance publicity it received, it was sure to prove a massive chunk of tooth-defying gristle, of such peculiar size and shape that it left one wondering whether there were not, after all, some rhinoceri on this island, or even some dinosaurs.

I sometimes walked down to the larger hotel which graced the waterfront, and stared at it speculatively. But I was no big Butter-and-Egg man now—*no homme du boeurre et des oeufs*.

And still no vessel called!

III

The one redeeming feature of Basse Terre was the astonishing cheapness with which one *could* live here, provided one were not too fastidious.

Each morning I enjoyed the luxury of a shave at an expenditure of exactly six cents.

This was really two cents too many—the barber taking advantage of my innocence—but I never raised a row about it. The shop itself, to be sure, was not palatial. Its floor was usually covered with a kinky fuzz from the heads of previous patrons, which a boy swept up from time to time and packed carefully away in a box as though for future use, perhaps in stuffing mattresses. But the barber himself—a cadaverous mulatto of courteous manner—was a true genius in his handling of a razor.

He would seat me in a straight-backed chair, tilt my head back to an angle of about sixty degrees, and start to slice. He used the Australian crawl, and he made it in one stroke. He just started the blade at my left ear, and that one great parabolic sweep carried him clean around to the other. And having thus completed his “once over,” he would start to lather again.

In this he was very thorough. His was one establishment in which soap was supplied without any extra charge. He filled my ears and eyes with it and put quarts of it down my neck. Then, with another magnificent gesture, he would start another slice. It was often with a feeling of trepidation that I afterward looked into the



Courtesy of Publishers' Photo Service

"The French Island Creole in the garb of the Empress Josephine
was a creature distinctly apart"

glass. But although a few pink spots might appear upon my chin or neck, he had a remarkable talent for missing the more important features, and my nose was always intact.

Finally he would powder and perfume me, with equal thoroughness, circling around and around my chair with an atomizer which might have served equally well for extinguishing fires, spraying me from every direction, and as I finally strolled homeward my fragrance was simply overpowering.

Liquor also was amazingly cheap in Guadeloupe, and every shop in town sold it. Champagne retailed at about the equivalent of \$1.50 a quart. The cognac, drawn usually from huge kegs, sold at about four cents a glass. The raw rum of local manufacture they almost gave away.

Every evening, as I waited for Vinita, I could see the entire population streaking homeward, each man or woman with a bottle under the arm wherewith to gladden the loved ones and brighten the hearthside. There was probably enough kick in one of those containers to put the average white man under the table and start his heirs quarrelling over his estate, yet it had little serious effect upon these darkies. Brought up in a land where rum was the principal product, they had become inured to it almost from infancy—if, indeed, they did not inherit their immunity—and although it temporarily increased their natural jollity, it seldom ruffled their good nature. A nightly jag for all the family at a cost of about ten cents!

There were *some* luxuries, however, which Croesus himself, with all his wealth, could scarcely have purchased in Basse Terre, and one of these was a bath.

The water was abundant enough; it came running in great aqueducts along the garden walls, and spouted into huge stone tubs where the servants washed their dishes; it gurgled and rippled all day long and lulled one to sleep at night. But tubs in which to immerse oneself were completely non-existent, and the one they used for pots and pans was never left unguarded.

Basse Terre was also a little short on plumbing. In fact, this city of over 10,000 inhabitants possessed practically no toilets of even the rudest barnyard description. The system of sanitation was a very simple one. Once a day, if Vinita happened to think of it, she would collect whatever refuse had accumulated about the house and heave it from an upper window in the general direction of the gutter. In theory, the stream which gushed from the hills above and flowed seaward through the center of every principal street was supposed to pick up such trash and carry it into the bay. But Vinita, like many another Guadeloupian housekeeper, was not a perfect marksman. In strolling the narrow alleys it was always advisable to keep a wary eye aloft. And the stream, instead of washing the filth into the sea, was much more apt to pile it in malodorous, fly-infested pyramids at every corner and crossing.

The French, in many respects, make excellent colonial governors. More than any other Europeans they pre-

serve intact the natural charm and picturesqueness of their West Indian possessions, making little attempt to alter native custom or change the native mode of living. All of which has the happy effect of leaving the average French colony a more interesting place for the casual tourist. But stopping off in one of the smaller cities, one found that the very policy of *laissez faire* which made it a charming place to see, also makes it a far from pleasant place of permanent residence.

Basse Terre, as capital of France's largest West Indian island, contained plenty of functionaries whose titles might have suggested an enthusiastic interest in public improvements. Their chief interest, however was in red tape. They devoted their time mainly to filling out various forms and lengthy reports on this, that, or the other thing, and stamping them with imposing red seals, and sending them to one another for official endorsement. What mattered a touch of dysentery in the water to those who preferred *vin rouge*? The stench was not distracting to those who had spent their childhood in cities like Brest, where about the same conditions prevailed.

Basse Terre might be completely fascinating in its vivid local color, but there were times, when the breeze ceased blowing, that it had too much atmosphere.

IV

Another week slipped past, and it became evident that I must replenish my wardrobe.

"If you-all give me thirty francs, honey," volunteered

Vinita, "Ah'll go an' buy dee goods, an' make you some pajamas. Ah'd simply love to see you-all in a pair of purple pajamas."

I felt it advisable, in spite of her oft-repeated boasts of respectability, to deny her this pleasure. But my wardrobe, limited to exactly what I had been wearing on that fateful day when I came ashore, required *some* additions. I realized this fact the more keenly when, retiring to my room one afternoon, I entrusted my one suit of clothes to the gay deceiver. Having promised me faithfully to wash my things within a few hours, she left me in enforced seclusion while she disappeared with the money that was to have been invested in starch, and left the clothes in the tub until I marched down into the courtyard, looking like a Roman Senator in my bed-sheet, [screams of appreciation from the Misses Honorine, Coralline, and Azaline] to do the laundering myself.

Wherefore I presently set out upon a general round of the shops.

The few little basement coops which masqueraded as stores were anything but emporiums. Those which were not devoted exclusively to the sale of rum usually contained such miscellaneous confections as fruit and kerosene lamps. Those whose doorways announced dry goods were pretty certain to have tinned sardines inside. It was only by a shop-to-shop canvas that I finally found some collars. The shirts which apathetic merchants brought down from dusty shelves were horrible even to look at, designed undoubtedly for African taste, with

wide, barbaric stripes. When at last, at the end of a whole day's hunt, I discovered what seemed a white one, I was completely overjoyed. Ecstatically I bought it, without pausing to debate the price or even to unfold my prize. And gleefully I carried it home. It certainly was white enough. But when I did unfold it, it fell from my neck to the floor. I'd purchased, by chance, an old-fashioned night-gown, which saved me from purple pajamas!

When I brought it out, to display it to Madame, she shook that sly finger again.

"Je vous prie, prenez garde, monsieur! Les creoles sont tres dangereux!"

"Yes," said Vinita, "those shameless *creoles* do anything for five francs. *Respectable* girls don' do such thing'. No, sah, not for *five* francs."

V

I finally found that bath!

First it was out along the beach, although a pair of sharks seemed to think they had an option on the spot. Thereafter it was up in the hills, in a most idyllic place.

A local bus, of the rubberneck type, left several times daily for the suburb of St. Claude, an hour's ride from the port, and one day I booked passage. Its departure was marked by considerable formality; every one had to buy tickets in advance; and leave-takings on the part of passengers were as poignant as though we were setting out for Llasa or Timbuctu. But it was a typically gay

crowd that finally rushed off toward the hills, whooping and cheering, and waving to every one along the trail.

The road curled and serpentine, ascending through patches of jungle and gleaming cane fields. Now or then we passed a cottage, usually a weatherbeaten shack of unpainted wood but often fronted by a shrine or a crucified Christ, and there was a prodigious fluttering of hands as the passengers crossed themselves. The air grew cooler with increasing altitude—a relief from the humid heat of the capital—but the fragrance of jasmine still lingered on the breeze. Up here one found the residences of the higher officials. Among the groves of royal palms an occasional *chateau* stood out, almost buried in bougainvillea, with lawns of close-cropped grass so brilliantly green that it actually pained one's eyes. Then we roared into the village of St. Claude, past a squatty old church and a dusty plaza, past the *Hopital Militaire*, to wind up at the barracks of the *Infanterie Coloniale*, whose coal-black sentry, resplendent in scarlet breeches, snapped to salute as we came to a grinding halt.

Strolling a mile or so inland, I found the most charming of pools, embowered in arching bamboo fronds. The plunge, in an icy mountain stream was most revivifying, and having dressed, I loafed there, feeling that I was back in God's world. Here one could feast his eyes on miles and miles of forested valley, and look out over conflagrations of fire trees as gorgeous as real flame, and over the summits of rolling hills to the bulk of Soufrière itself.

As I watched, the warm glow of a tropic sunset suf-

fused the sky with sensuous color, then faded to mystic dusk. Voices came to me clearly across the mountain air, the voices of girls striding down steep jungle trails, with their loads of produce for the morrow's market. And far away, beyond the palms, the lighted church-dial in St. Claude's old cathedral beamed out through the night like a jolly old fat moon.

But that clock awakened me from my reverie. I scrambled to my feet and hurried back to the highroad, just as the bus came along to carry me back to the vileness of Basse Terre.

VI

I hated this place now! Its heat! Its stench! Its dim, depressing alleys!

All the color which had charmed me on my first night was abhorrent on the fifteenth. Negroes parading in search of assignation . . . Whites dancing with the blacks . . . Even that barbaric, infectious laughter seemed ghoulis and profane!

Vinita was waiting in the doorway.

"You don' go? You don' sail on de boad?"

"Boat! Boat! What boat?"

"Dat French boad what jes' stop in."

Ye gods! The mossy cobbles failed to impede my progress this time. I went skidding over them toward the wharf, while Michelin shrieked her joy, and countless darkies almost fell from the balconies along the way as

they leaned far out to applaud my furious race. I reached the waterfront just in time to see the sternlights disappear. I'd missed it!

Old Crusoe himself could not have bettered the performance I gave them.

CHAPTER IV

THE CARNIVAL AT POINTE-À-PITRE

I

It was Baynes the cable man, who brought me another ray of hope.

I had formed the habit of idling in his office, for he was a companionable sort, and the tick of his instruments was a cheering reminder that we were still in touch with a world beyond Basse Terre.

"Foster!" he hailed, as I climbed his steps one morning. "I've just intercepted a message. The *Colombo* calls at Pointe-à-Pitre, on the other side of the island. Can't say when. I don't even know what sort of a boat she is. But you'd better hop over there. She's bound for Trinidad."

II

I hopped at once. The distance was about forty miles, and I had missed the morning bus, but I was unencumbered with baggage (except for two extra collars and that night-shirt), so I bade farewell to Madame and Vinita, and promptly hit the trail.

The road led along the coast. Beyond a fringe of coco-palms the reefs stood out in emerald green against the deeper blue, and islands dotted the horizon—the tiny

Saintes, a cluster of gleaming rocks, and Marie Galante, a frowning shadow in the background.

Along the way the country folk were coming in to market. They seemed a simpler people than those I had met in town; far from laughing at a stranger, they appeared almost shy at times; and to my "Bon jour," they responded with solemn courtesy, bowing their turbaned heads. Toward noon I purchased from one of them some diminutive bananas, locally known as "*figues*." The largest was no larger than one's thumb, but they had a delicious flavor, and I lunched upon them beside a babbling stream.

When I resumed my way, however, the sun was high and tropical, and the road more dusty. From time to time a Ford dashed past, but it was always filled with darkies; the drivers, with the peremptory air of drivers the world over, honked their horns at me, and their passengers hooted; but none offered to stop, and evening found me still on the trail, far from my destination.

I was obliged to call a halt.

Inquiries at a straggling village of a dozen huts finally revealed a Good Samaritan who had a bed to spare. She was a *grande dame* of the older school—amazingly tall and gaunt, and unspeakably slow in movement—but she listened attentively as I explained my further needs. *Du café? Oui*, there was *café*. But *oeufs? Pas des oeufs*. There were no eggs, *monsieur*.

I displayed a couple of francs, only eight cents, but doubtless impressive in the rural regions, and at length,

having disappeared for a moment, she returned with half a dozen eggs, and I sat down at her plain board table to a most satisfactory repast. As I ate, by the light of a tiny oil lamp, many black woolly heads appeared in doorway and window, but I was growing accustomed now to such surveillance. And on this particular occasion the local citizenry was soon distracted by a furious altercation outside.

A neighbor—another *grande dame* of ordinarily majestic mien—was accusing my hostess of something or other. Such was the speed and volume of her discourse that I could not make out the nature of the offense, but it sounded decidedly criminal.

In their excitement, both old ladies discarded their dignity. Their voices rose high and shrill. In turn, each would address the gathering multitude, which at first was inclined to laugh and josh, but which presently took sides until the entire village was embroiled in the verbal fracas. Now or then the plaintiff, spluttering like a machine gun, would rush half-way across the road as though to wreak personal violence upon my hostess, but always stopped short of hand-to-hand combat. At other times she would turn away in apparent disgust, as though she had decided it futile to reason with so obtuse and unworthy an opponent. But she never retired far. The joy of mutual recrimination was far too sweet to be thus abandoned, and she would soon return to it with renewed fury and enthusiasm.

It was my hostess who finally, at the end of two hours'

exchange of abuse, quit the fracas in lofty scorn, to lead me up a rickety stairway to a small but surprisingly neat little room. I immediately turned in. But as I fell asleep, I could still hear the other woman voicing her troubles to the moon and the stars outside, and I caught the oft-repeated word, "*Oeufs, oeufs, oeufs, oeufs!*" The Good Samaritan, it seems, had stolen her neighbor's eggs.

III

In the morning, Fortune smiled, for a truck from some local rum distillery was loading for Pointe-à-Pitre, and its driver was making a little extra change for himself by taking passengers.

Huge kegs were already piled so high that they threatened to break the camion, and atop each keg sat a colored lady of far from delicate proportions. The only empty barrel was one which overhung the tailboard, lashed rather precariously to the rest by a piece of knotted rope. Sitting astride of it one felt a very fit subject for the cartoonist. At every bounce I quite expected to execute a back summersault into the roadway, but somehow I managed to hang on, as did the barrel, and away we jolted toward Pointe-à-Pitre.

My companions were in holiday mood, it developed, being on their way to the city to join in the annual Mardi-Gras festivities which were shortly to ensue. They whooped and cheered and sang in the lusty manner of all picnicking Guadeloupians—there was not a cough in

the carload—and we flew through the jungles like a circus parade gone wrong.

Guadeloupe really consists of two islands. Although they are separated merely by a narrow strait, crossed by a brief causeway, they are quite different from one another in topography. The one on which Basse Terre (a misnomer) is situated, was ruggedly and loftily volcanic. On our landward side, as we sped on along the coast, the hills rose steeply, clothed in their impenetrable forest, with waterfalls leaping from distant purple cliffs, like fountains from the clouds. But as we continued toward the island of Grande Terre (similarly mis-named), the heights dwindled, giving way to low and gently rolling hills.

In contrast to the wild grandeur we had left behind, the new scene appeared rather uninspiring. Yet this level country was far more suited to agriculture; the land was covered with expansive plantations of sugarcane, hedged with rows of royal palms; the natives met along the way were mostly better dressed than those of the capital; and the city into which we presently roared was far more modern and progressive.

Pointe-à-Pitre quite outranks Basse Terre in commercial importance, and it is here that most tourist ships call. Although somewhat less picturesque than those of the capital, its streets criss-cross at right angles and are wider and better paved. Upon its central *Rue Frebault* are real shops, boasting such names as "Sans Pareil," "Bon Marche," "Au Chic Parisienne." Upon the wide and

sunny *Place de la Victoire*, in testimony to pep and progress, stands a glaringly new white edifice which proclaims itself a "Chambre du Commerce." And it has a hotel—a regular hotel—complete even to a white-tiled bathroom whose water actually does choose to run!

At the moment of my arrival, too, Pointe-à-Pitre was in gala array.

In one little drinking-house a jazz-band held forth, composed of an accordion player and a host of rhythm-beaters who worked vigorously at drums or steel triangles or tin cans filled with buckshot, while the enthusiastic waitresses jigged and shimmied as they brought more rum. In the homes many parties were in session, always with a host of the curious gathered upon the sidewalks before them or staring in from neighboring balconies. And through the streets marched a town crier—a pompous little Frenchman in a gigantic sun-helmet, preceded by a darkey with a bass-drum—who stopped at each corner to bellow the proclamation that on the morrow the city would burst forth in the annual celebration of the Mardi-Gras.

IV

There was no *Colombo* in the harbor, nor any other ship. So, dreading the probable inroads into my diminished cash, I applied a trifle dubiously at that big hotel.

If my lodgings at Basse Terre had cost thirty francs a day, this comparative palace should charge at least sixty.

But either Madame X—— had overcharged me, or else my present state of shabbiness was conducive to better bargains. Another French lady behind the *caisse*-counter surveyed me with a speculative eye, as all French land-ladies will.

“Thirty a day,” she said.

Truly this Guadeloupe was a poor man’s paradise! That sum, \$1.20 in U. S. money, included a large and airy room, use of bath, wine with meals, and the privilege of parading up and down a royal staircase nearly thirty feet wide.

At one’s beck and call, too, were a dozen boys, all of whom spoke French and English. They were gay little imps from the island of St. Barts, a dependency of Guadeloupe situated among the northernmost of the Antilles. Their distant home, which they themselves pronounced as “Saint Bats,” had little connection, except governmentally, with the rest of these French possessions. In early times it had been a favored resort of the buccaneers; later, for a considerable period, it had been the property of Sweden; and its people today, offspring of English or Dutch sea-rovers, with a dash of Scandinavian blood, were anything but French.

Still sailors by profession, the St. Barts men roamed all over the Caribbean in their tiny sloops or schooners, and they were a common sight on the streets of Pointe-à-Pitre. The men, evidently white beneath their heavy tan, all had a peculiar sameness of feature, the result undoubtedly of continued intermarriage, and they ac-

centuated this by dressing exactly alike. All wore deep blue trousers and a light blue jacket, held together by a heavy leather belt through which was thrust a piratical-looking knife. Their faces were hard; all were sadly in need of a shave, though never intentionally bearded; and they had an amusing habit of shuffling about the town in single file, almost in lock-step, seldom conversing, and apparently aloof from the life of the other islanders.

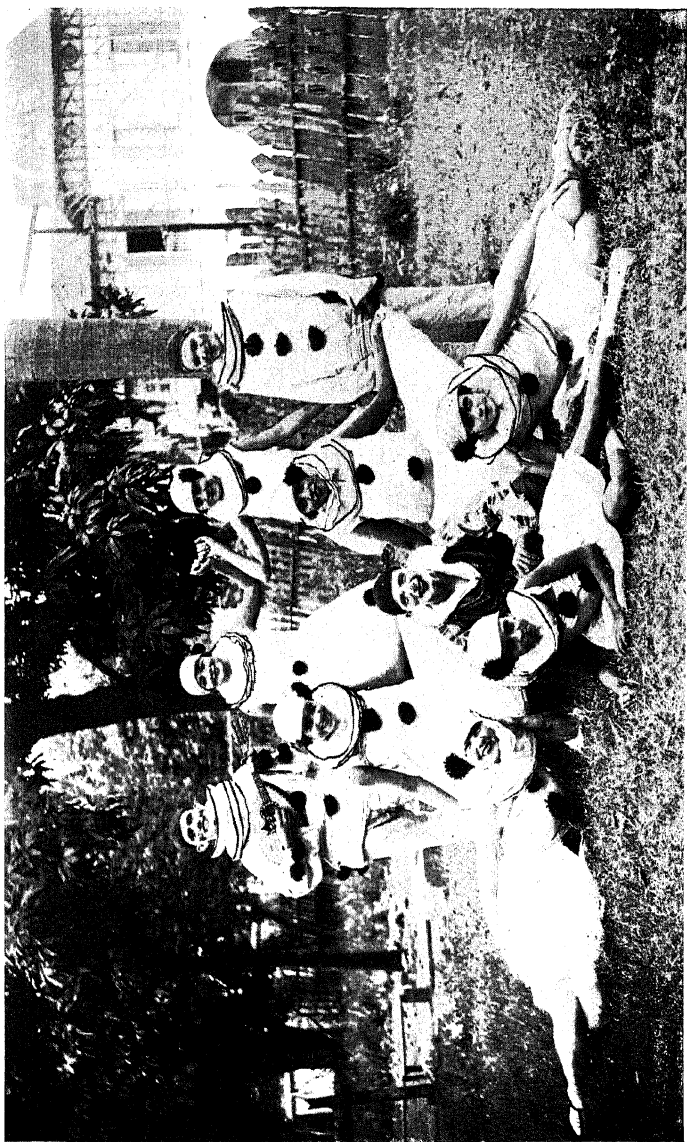
For the French they had little use; for the negroes none at all. Little John, the lad who served me at the table—a youth diminutive even for the sixteen years which he professed—often expressed a hope that the United States might some day acquire St. Barts.

"That's a white mon's country, sir," he would say. "This here a black mon's place."

It was a viewpoint altogether astounding in French territory. But Little John, son of a roving schooner captain who plied the local waters between Guadeloupe and Martinique, waited with obvious repugnance upon a guest of color, and referred to negroes as "niggers."

"They *stink*, sir!" he exclaimed to me, expanding his little chest as he put his whole heart and soul into the emphasis. "In St. Barts, sir, they's not a nigger on the island. And some day, sir, I'm going to the United States."

Unlike the solemn grown-ups, these younger Barts boys were very bright and merry, continually up to mischief, and constantly scurrying about the corridors, pursuing one another with their vichy bottles as they ran to answer



Even the élite turn out in costume for the carnival

a call for brandy-and-soda. They were such an intriguing lot, in fact, that—feeling like a millionaire after my discovery of the cheap hotel rates—I dug into my pocket that night, and sent Little John and his pals to the movies.

Ten minutes later a horse-faced Frenchman, the boss of the establishment, came up to announce that Madame had made a mistake. My bill, he said, if I wished to remain, would not be thirty but sixty francs a day.

v

On the morrow there was again no *Colombo*, but the Mardi Gras did start, and continued for three days.

It was the usual carnival of the southern countries—a revel designed to exhaust all surplus deviltry before the beginning of Lent.

The religious side of it was limited mainly to the ringing of church bells at some obscure hour of the night. The first clangs resounded from the huge yellow Cathedral behind the *Chambre de Commerce*. Other churches quickly answered, until the entire city reechoed and reverberated with a most discordant din. It awakened even the countless cocks which ordinarily prided themselves upon calling Guadeloupe's attention to a coming dawn, and by the time I gave up all effort at slumber and made my way to the lobby, the sidewalks were filled with dainty French half-castes on their way to service, very chic and demure despite their solemn black garb, affecting an unwonted sedateness.

Then came the marketers, with baskets on their heads, for nothing could swerve the darker hordes from their daily barter and gossip. The market of Pointe-à-Pitre was even more colorful than that of Basse Terre. The great shed stood in the center of town, but a small fee was charged for space therein, wherefore only the most distinguished of the local peddlers used it, the majority laying out their wares on the sidewalks of surrounding streets. Their numbers now were swelled by rural visitors who'd come in for purposes of celebration. Some had set up boxes or little stands, displaying notions and jewelry and even such unusual luxuries as shoes, but these were the aristocrats of salesdom. The common venders squatted beside banana-leaves spread out to hold their fruits and vegetables.

Today they overflowed the market region for several blocks. One who sought to make his way through them felt almost a pity for the loneliness of mortals in a New York subway crowd. But Pointe-à-Pitre's dozen or more chauffeurs seemed quite unworried. They rather loved to blow their horns under any circumstances; today they kept up a continuous racket; and having sounded their warning, they drove into the center of the *melée* with no more concern for human life than their counterparts in Paris.

Toward noon the first few masqueraders made their appearance, in groups of twenty or thirty. They were mostly burly negroes, of the town's rougher element, clad in the made-over clothing of their womenfolk, with their

faces concealed in masks of grotesque design. In these earlier days their antics were confined usually to pursuing one another with brandished sticks, or parading through the streets to call upon such merchants as might contribute a few *sous* to be rid of their interruption.

The local jazz-band, with its one accordion and its many amateur trap-drummers, was now in great demand. All day it marched and countermarched at the head of one motley troop or another, and all night it held forth in the corner cafe, while the waitresses blackbottomed. Back in the days of Lafcadio Hearn, who spent some two years among the French West Indies, the dances had been mostly African, performed to the barbaric and monotonous beat of drums. They still were barbaric enough, but gay French tunes had robbed them of monotony. Today the Guadeloupians wiggled with all the savagery of the Congo combined with the art of Harlem. So long as the rum flowed—and it never ceased—the orchestra seemed tireless, and the racket continued until the church-bells pealed again.

By Wednesday, the true Mardi and the climax of the celebration, the whole town seemed fagged out. The morning passed without the appearance of a single masquerader. At noon only a few had gathered in the *Place de la Victoire*, wandering rather aimlessly about the grassy lawns, striking queer poses, mumbling to themselves, and otherwise striving quite ineffectually to be funny.

Yet something of expectancy quite impregnated the

air. Countless *gendarmes* were on hand—their snow-white uniforms, as always, accentuating the blackness of their skin—and they were unusually attentive. When a party of clowns gathered about me, quite evidently with some design of horse-play wherein I was to be the horse, the police came scurrying from all directions. Yet even the *gendarmes*, despite their disciplined dignity, were in holiday mood, and they “shooed” off the maskers with a cheerful frivolity.

Slowly the town began to liven up. Food-venders, deserting the market for the village green, were doing a thriving trade. A first party of celebrants came marching down the road in costumes of blazing scarlet, led by a tall, slim darkey who played staccato melodies upon a thin reed pipe. Then another group, all in full evening attire. One could only wonder where they found so many high silk hats, these darkies who ordinarily went even without shoes, but they were perfect exponents of what the well dressed opera fan should wear, and they performed a rather amusing burlesque upon the behavior of the punctiliously formal French.

It was apparent that the Guadeloupians had spent weeks in preparation, both to create elaborate costumes and to practice their charades. A huge, hairy monkey rode past upon a bicycle, his artificial tail floating behind him as he pedalled. A woman pushed through the crowd with a gigantic rummy-nosed baby in her arms, accusing one or another of us of its fatherhood. And innumerable others

followed, sometimes individually, sometimes in organized groups.

In many other countries—particularly in South America—I had seen this annual carnival. In Buenos Aires, perhaps, the floats and displays were more gorgeous. In Rio, where they cover you with perfume from unexpected squirt-guns and shower you with confetti, there was more of a spirit of mischief. But for originality, and unrestrained noise, this Guadeloupe surpassed them all. One man, dressed as a donkey, in a long-eared mask, his body bent double under a load of sugar-cane, galloped joyfully through the streets, kicking whoever crossed his path. A made-up bull and his hayseed keeper followed, galloping and bucking through the mass of on-lookers, deliberately trying to knock the spectators down. But no one seemed to resent it.

Small knots of people gathered tightly about the individual performers. In the center of one group a tiny youngster was dancing. He could scarcely have been three years, but he was a genius at the Charleston. Intent of face, he flicked and clicked his bare little heels with all his puny might, while the tall darkey with the reed pipe played twinkling native ditties. The crowd, clapping hands and stamping time, shrieked its laughter and applause. On and on the youngster danced; his little face became drawn with effort, but his feet continued to jazz.

When finally he was stopped, more or less by force, another took the floor, to perform with equal zest. Coins

tinkled into the hat that was passed for one after another of the juveniles, until we had no coins to tinkle. But still another took the floor, a baby who looked as though he had scarcely learned to toddle, but who Charlestoned with the same complete abandon. Grimly he watched the hat go round; there were no pennies left. His face twitched; he was ready to weep, this artist without applause. Hopelessly he looked to one or another of us as he danced and danced, terrified with failure. Then papa solved the problem. In secret he returned us all our coins, and passed the hat again!

By this time others were dancing. A military band—the pompomed pride of *l'Infanterie Coloniale*—came strutting over the green. Young and old, fat and thin, the Guadeloupians were hopping about the park, their costumes now in rags, and even the *gendarmes*, all dignity forgotten, were whooping it up with the rest.

At dinner that night the party in evening dress came pouring into the hotel. The Barts boys scurried about the place with trays of tinkling glasses. The temporarily élite bowed to themselves in the huge mirrors that lined the lobby, doffing and waving their high silk hats. Their leader hopped clean over the cashier's desk and then hopped back again. Whereafter, with the peculiar knack which West Indians possess of throwing off a jag, they all sat down in perfect grace to eat their meal with unimpeachable sobriety! But outside the streets still rang with shouts and laughter, and the pavements echoed, as the natives danced and danced.

VI

When I settled my hotel bill that night, it was to discover that I had only a trifle over three dollars left, and I was in far from festive mood as I walked to the waterfront to watch again for the *Colombo*.

Behind me the town resounded with celebration, but the harbor was quiet, except for a chattering group that waited by the gangway of a little island schooner. She was bound, so her St. Barts skipper said, for Fort de France, in Martinique. There, I reflected, I might have better luck in catching a vessel to Trinidad, in pursuit of my cash and baggage. But the fare was one hundred francs—just about forty too much. Forty too much!

I turned gloomily away, and glanced out to sea. It presented a glorious picture, that curving bay, with Guadeloupe encircling it in a mountainous horse-shoe, and as I gazed at it, the sun went down behind Soufrière, all golden fire and smoky cloud, like another volcanic eruption.

An affable old Frenchman, standing near me, talked brokenly of the last.

"Ashes!" he cried, and held his hand sky-high to show me how they had shot into the air. "Quakes!" he exclaimed, and his body shook, as the mountains had rocked the earth. "Waves!" he gasped, and his arm swept out with an undulating motion to picture a tidal deluge.

But that last gesture carried my eyes toward the outer harbor. And there she was—the *Colombo*—steaming

slowly shoreward. Only it was not a ship on which one could possibly secure passage, or even work one's way. The mystery ship for which I had waited was a British man-of-war, calling on a courtesy visit en route to Trinidad!

That settled it. On the little island schooner there was a flurry of raising sail. The last of the native passengers were milling up the plank. I milled with them. A hatchway yawned before me, and I dropped—undiscovered, I thought—into the yawning black hold. But immediately a lantern flared from above, and a face peered down. It was an unshaven face and a hard one, the face of the St. Barts skipper.

"Shhhh!" he whispered. "You no got money? That's all right. John, my son John who work at the hotel, he tell me you good fellow. You send him to the movies, eh? You hide until the agent goes, and I take you to Martinique."

CHAPTER V

SAILING TO MARTINIQUE

I

THROUGH the tropic night—a night that seemed almost as brilliant beneath its great full moon as the average tropic day—we cruised cheerfully southward.

A steady breeze filled the sails, and keeled us over until the negro passengers fought for a place at the drier rail. But this was too good to last, and another morning found us idling in the doldrums, in the lee of Marie Galante.

On the roof of the diminutive shed which served as a cook-shack, the skipper sat in his blue dungarees, picking thoughtfully at his bare toes, glancing occasionally at the heavens, but displaying little emotion. Son of a pirate that he was, with an ancestry which not inconceivably included Montbars or Rock Brasiliano, he was a figure apart from the mass of black humanity sprawling about our decks. One could imagine him an early slaver, with a wicked cutlass at his belt, importing from distant African jungles this load of human freight.

I tried to pass the creeping hours with such romantic fancies. But meanwhile the sun rose higher and hotter. The infrequent puffs of air, as warm as furnace draughts, scarcely ruffled our canvas. And the seas, in utter defiance

of the atmospheric calm, continued their motion, rocking the cockle-shell of a boat with seeming animosity.

At noon the skipper beckoned me to a luncheon of fish, flavoured with the paint from the galley roof on which he had laid it out. He also provided a cup of coffee and rum, which redoubled the sweat on my forehead. But he ventured no prediction as to when we might hope to reach Martinique, and throughout the day the few white clouds on the edge of the sky stood just where they were, as though painted upon the heavens.

I thought of all the poems I'd read on the romance of sail and sea. And I watched a rusty old cargo-vessel come over the rim of the world behind us—an ugly thing, belching vile smoke from its funnel, but independent of wind or calm—a vessel that steamed contemptuously past us, perhaps on her way to Trinidad.

II

With nightfall came another breeze, and a second morning found Dominica drifting toward us.

From a distance it appeared black and frowningly sombre, its mist-shroud portent with rain. As we approached, we caught a few of its showers—for this is notoriously the wettest island upon the Caribbean—and they caused a small panic among our negroes. Some crawled into the stinking little hold; others burrowed among their neighbors, seeking shelter under one another, but most ineffectually, since those on top imme-

diately climbed off and tried in turn to wriggle underneath.

Dominica's climate, however, had its compensations. From its shadowy, ominous mass, emerged wooded valleys and rocky cliffs, with countless ribbons of frothy white water hurtling from many a high precipice, or raging through the tropical jungles.

In earlier years this Dominica had been the last refuge of the savages who gave the sea its name. A hardy, warlike race quite different from the Arawaks of the northern islands, the Caribs had here frustrated European settlement for the better part of a Century, until the English, finally gaining a foothold, were obliged to treat with them and to grant them a reservation of their own. Here today a handful of them survive—about the only Caribs to be found on the Caribbean—and not many of these are still of undiluted stock. Although from the first they hated the white man, they recognized the negro slaves as fellow sufferers, and mated freely with such as escaped to their mountain fastnesses, wherefore few of the aborigines are now without some dash of colored blood.

We paused at Roseau, Dominica's capital, just long enough for a brief stroll through a town that stood out the more shabbily against its verdantly mountainous setting. It really was not unpicturesque, but alas for the population! One knew, as one stepped ashore, that one was back on British soil, where a common language gave the darkies a weapon for the persecution of travellers.

Half a dozen Vinitas—for this, you will recall, was *her* home town—ogled one vampishly from the doorways of their disreputable shacks, while youths and grown men formed a clamorous escort, tugging at one's coat tails, and pleading for alms.

Even by retiring to the schooner, one did not escape them, for several Dominicans had booked passage with us to Fort de France, and among them a lad named Henry, radiant in a silk shirt with orange and purple stripes.

"I'm a man of devious wanderings," he said, "and multiplicit professions. I've shipped as steward and stoker. I'm an actor and a photographer. I peregrinated the United States as a vaudeville acrobat. I practiced medicine in Harlem. And I was a director of Marcus Garvey's company, the Black Star Steamship Line."

He was a trifle too fluent in speech to be completely convincing. I felt certain that sooner or later he would attempt to sell me some species of gold-brick. But apparently his interest was mainly in making an impression, and he was eager for news of Garvey. Was Marcus out of jail yet? He himself had made a hasty exit from New York about the time the federal authorities began their investigation of the Black Star concern.

"But I was glad to emigrate the States," he continued. "That Ku Klux Klan made life mos' grievous for yours truly. I've got a French wife—procured her in Boulogne among my trophies of war—and the Kluxes down in Georgia didn't like it. No, sir, they jus' exited the two of

us with tars and feathers. And they ain't no Klan where we're living now, over in Martinique."

There was one drawback to Fort-de-France, he admitted. It afforded little livelihood for an acrobat. He had taken up spiritualism, however, and was holding meetings in which the white wife made a very excellent ghost.

"Oh, I get along anywhere," he concluded, favoring me with a broadly confidential wink. "I'm the black sheep of my family, and I'm addict at black arts."

III

We sailed again in early afternoon, through a drizzle of liquid sunshine, and midnight found us off French Martinique, near the ruins of St. Pierre.

A pale white moon hung low in the sky, shedding its ghostly radiance upon the ill-fated city, but old Mount Pelée, whose eruption had all but buried the once-gay metropolis, lay hidden behind a mist.

One could picture St. Pierre in its heyday as not unlike the towns of Guadeloupe. The same bright-hued dwellings. The same narrow streets, with rivulets racing through their center from luxuriant hills above. And the same happy darkies, talking from morning until night, and shrieking with unrestrained laughter.

Then, on May 8, 1902, the great volcano which had been inactive for over half a century burst suddenly into flame. It had served warning; there had been deep rum-

bles in its crater for many weeks; and a few of the people had fled. But the majority trusted to prayer, to the special masses which the priests held daily in the cathedral. They were still praying when old Pelée suddenly exploded, hurling its ashes into the sky in mighty clouds that blotted out the sun; blistering cinders fell for hour after hour, scorching man and beast, kindling great forest fires; and down the volcanic slopes swept rivers of molten lava. The earth shook with the mighty blasts; tempests swept away the roofs; and as the populace rushed for safety toward the bay, even the sea rose up in mighty tidal waves, hurling back the terrified crowds toward the death which poured down from the land.

"In the gray dawn of that May morning," wrote Lafcadio Hearn, "there were 45,000 people living in Saint Pierre. Instead of sunrise came a rain of fire, amid which the whole population, shrieking, wailing, crazed, crammed the cathedral only to die; climbed the mountains and sought the forests, only to be burned or buried alive; fled to the river, to find it a torrent of scalding water; and to the sea, only to meet a watery grave. At noon there was but one living individual in the ruined and desolate city of Saint Pierre, and he was a negro prisoner, burned, but not dead, in a subterranean dungeon, where he had been confined for crime."

The ill-fated city had never risen from its ashes. In the ghostly moonlight one could discern an occasional arch or patch of wall, entangled now with creeping vines which seemed intent upon dragging to earth these last

remaining stones. The moan of the surf came out to us like the wailing of the dead.

IV

I watched the dim outline of the jungle-grown hills slip past, seeming to deepen in shadow as the night drained from the sky. Those hills held still another menace—or had, in earlier years—the dreaded and venomous *fer-de-lance*, the most aggressive of serpents. Some writers have said it deliberately attacks man, which seems a bit far-fetched. But it does seek the warmth of the road at night, where man is most apt to travel.

Back in the days of Hearn it was an ever present danger. How it ever came here, no one knows, for snakes are rare throughout the West Indies, and (except in Trinidad, whose fauna are those of the neighboring South American mainland) this is the only one ever found whose bite is apt to prove fatal. It existed in Saint Lucia, and some say Guadeloupe, but in none of the other Antilles excepting Martinique, where the first attempts at colonization failed because Europeans were “terrified by the prodigious number of serpents which covered its soil.”

Not only did the *fer-de-lance* seek the highways at night; by day he lurked in the cane-plantations, preferring thickets from which the shade trees had been cleared; and the cane-cutters maintained an alert watch, as they labored, for the suddenly darting head. Wrote Hearn, in 1900: ¹

¹ “Two Years in the French West Indies,” Harper & Bros.

"The fer-de-lance reigns absolute king over the mountains and ravines; he is lord of the forest and the solitudes by day, and by night he extends his dominion over the public roads, the familiar paths, the parks, the pleasure resorts. . . . Even in the brightest moon you cannot venture to enter the woods without an experienced escort; you cannot trust your eyes to detect danger; at any moment a seeming branch, a knot of lianas, a pink or gray root, a clump of pendent yellow fruit may suddenly take life, writhe, stretch, spring, strike. Then you will need aid indeed, and most quickly, for within the span of a few heart-beats the wounded flesh chills, tumefies, softens."

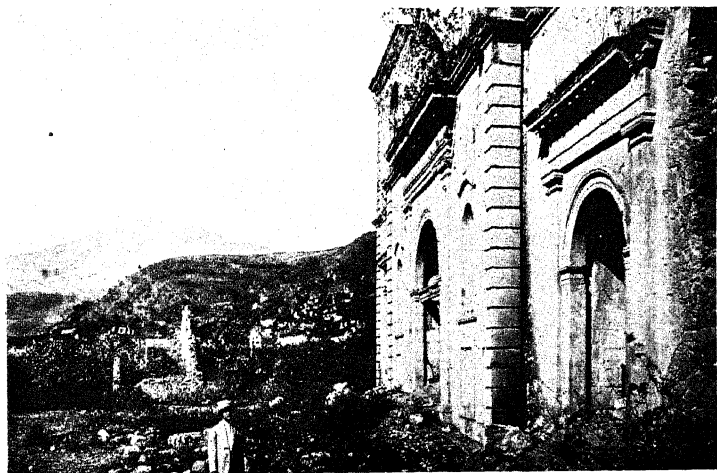
Truly, this Martinique had been a siren among islands—a treacherous, tropic vampire. Yet it proved a charming and beautiful one, in the manner of all great sirens. The morning sun tipped its hills with pink as we slipped into the harbor of Fort-de-France. On the right loomed the old gray walls of Fort St. Louis, rising from the water's edge like the Palisades of the Hudson. On the left a lesser fortress. Between them, a city of bright houses, mostly yellow with scarlet roofs, and topped by many church domes. And beyond, crowning every summit, a tiny chapel which dated no doubt from the days of Empress Josephine, all of them sparkling white, like the sails of some futurist fleet upon a pea-green sea.

v

We scudded shoreward past the rusty old freighter we had seen several days before, now anchored in the bay.



The coast of Dominica



Courtesy of Furness Bermuda Line

The ruins of St. Pierre

The flag it flew was Danish, and a blond Scandinavian, presumably its skipper, surveyed us from the bridge.

I hailed him.

"Are you bound for Trinidad?"

He spat unpleasantly over the rail. His sunburned face was a vivid crimson beneath a flaxen halo.

"Ya!" he answered. "But no passengers, if that's what you'd ask." And as though to prove himself a man of forceful decision, he turned toward a fleet of peddlers' boats hovering about his ladder. "Py Yudas!" he roared at the negroes manning them, "you clear oud, you hear? You come near dis shib, I break you the bottom in, und feed you to the sharks!"

It was evident that I could expect little help from him. So, as we let go our own anchor nearby, I hailed one of the native boatmen, and rowed shoreward to the customs wharf. There a *gendarme* stopped me.

"*Passepor'?*"

I had one, but it was in Trinidad, along with my other possessions. So, reverting to a formula which had solved many a problem during soldier days in France, I murmured, "*No compris,*" and started to pass on. At this the black policeman immediately shrilled an alarm, and two others pounced upon me, jabbering excited *creole*. I could have protested, I suppose, that I was merely a voyager from one French island to another, but past experience with Gallic red tape in other parts of the world had led me to suspect that even such (were he not a stowaway like myself) might be expected to present

some sort of official document. So, in a moment of inspiration, I pointed to the Danish ship, indicating that I would shortly reembark.

"Ah! Vous etes marins?"

They allowed me to pass. Martinique was evidently as hospitable to transient guests as the other West Indian colonies. But when, within a block, I incautiously produced a notebook to record some observation, they looked suspicious again.

In almost any foreign land the writer who pauses upon the street to do this will quickly draw a crowd. To the illiterate natives there is something of sorcery in the mere act of scribbling. Even when they have some vague comprehension of his purpose, their curiosity is aroused. What can this stranger see of interest in the (to them) familiar sights? The *gendarmes* here were zealous guardians of *Les Antilles Francaises*; undoubtedly they did not consider mine a sailorlike behavior; although they said nothing, a couple of them formed an inquisitive escort; and when I paused at one crossing a bemoustached white officer edged closer, affecting absorption in other matters, but contriving to glance keenly over my shoulder.

I soon forgot him, however, in the fascinating swirl of humanity that eddied through the streets. In their costumes the ladies of Martinique were duplicates of those at Guadeloupe, yet if possible the colors of their flowing robes appeared even more gaudy, and they chose their turbans to contrast strikingly with the hues of their

robes, yellow with blue, orange with brown, violet with red.

After a brief visit to Dominica, one felt a higher appreciation for the French islanders. Among other West Indians they seemed a race apart. They might have a childish, African sense of humor most annoying to one forced to dwell among them; they might regard the white man with a lack of reverence rather shocking to a gentleman from South Carolina; but they had copied from the French a certain grace seldom found among British or American negroes; and their years of complete equality had given them a commensurate pride and dignity.

They did not ask for alms. Occasionally, to be sure, one met a professional mendicant, but she did not hail a visiting Yankee as a *special* agent for the distribution of such. Nor did the general public trail one in a heel-treading throng, making life miserable for the traveller as they do in most of the Antilles.

I had noted this in Guadeloupe, but had assumed that the natives there, seeing few visitors, had not learned to molest them. In Martinique, however, one could not attribute it to lack of familiarity with the species, for Fort de France appears upon the itinerary of nearly every big winter cruise.

This city, far more than those of Guadeloupe, has an appeal for the average traveller. One finds here much of the color of Basse Terre, and all the modernity of Pointe-à-Pitre, and there are far more of those buildings and

monuments which, for one reason or another, are classed as "sights." There are the many old churches, and the cathedral, most conspicuous of the city's landmarks. There's the Bibliotheque Schoelcher, a library so barbaric in architecture that it might well be mistaken for a heathen temple, and dedicated to the Schoelcher who, as emancipator of the slaves, is by far the outstanding local hero, with streets and monuments and parks honoring him throughout the French islands. There are the new government buildings, much finer than anything in Guadeloupe. And, the most noted of the sights, the statue of Josephine, daughter of a local rum distiller, who went out and made good by marrying Napoleon Bonaparte.

It stands in the center of a large open square known as the Savanne, a rather barren, neglected expanse of grass and weed, and Her Majesty looks rather lonely. The wind-blown royal palms which form a guardian circle about her monument are plastered with cigarette advertisements; the goats crop idly about her pedestal. Yet she herself is very sweet and chaste in her cold white marble; there is grace and stateliness in her poise; and there's a touching pathos in her expression as she looks longingly out across the harbor toward the village of Trois Ilets where she spent her barefoot childhood.

Poor lady! She no doubt enjoyed her ermines, but Napoleon must have had a mean disposition when one met him across the breakfast table. He cast her aside for a better marriage, and when, in the days of his banish-

ment, she sought to join him at St. Helena, the powers refused permission. She might have had a happier life, I felt, if she had just stayed in Martinique and played around with the local boys.

VI

Why, indeed, should any one wish to leave this pleasant land—unless he had to get to Trinidad to recapture cash and baggage?

At noon I rambled back toward the hills behind the town, and climbed them by a zigzag path which passed through mango orchards. The mangos provided a lunch, and I loafed for an hour or two beside the shrine at the top, rather enjoying the place. It had changed, perhaps, since the days of Hearn, yet the people were much the same.

As I lingered, the bushes parted upon a slope above, and a tall, slender native girl descended the path like a mechanical statue. Her hands were clasped behind her head, though not to steady her basket, for years of carrying a burden thus had made her an expert juggler. There was freedom in the pose, and the joy of living. Others followed. The younger girls usually travelled in groups, chatting. But sometimes they were silent, and there was something unreal in that procession of wordless bronze creatures, passing with such lithe grace.

Too bad to be broke, and have to hurry on! And the old Danish freighter in the harbor appeared to be getting up steam. Perhaps it would take no passengers, as

its captain had said. But if it would conveniently wait until dark, I'd decided that it might have a stowaway.

VII

I continued my rambles through the afternoon, feeling that it would be well to see as much as possible of the town in these few brief hours. And it probably *might* have been well, had I not undertaken to see Fort St. Louis, the old citadel at the edge of the Savanne.

Its venerable gray walls had been the scene of many a battle in the French and English wars. From the inner harbor behind it De Grasse had sailed for his historic battle with Rodney's fleet, the most decisive naval conflict in Caribbean history. I didn't know that it still was used by France as a naval base today. As I breezed cheerfully into its forbidden portals, several sentries sprang to ready attention, but having nodded to them pleasantly, I started to copy the inscription printed over the gate:

"Honneur des 170 colons et marins qui—"

That harmless dedication was certainly not a naval secret, but the protectors of the fortress seemed prepared, if need be, to die in its defence.

"Sacre!"

Black soldiers came running from all directions. They pounced upon me like angry hornets. My protests were lost in a babel of furious creole. And I gravitated rapidly out of the gateway, a victim of what the Bowery once knew as "the bum's rush."

This was an outrage!

I picked myself up, spluttering with fury. I called down the vengeance of the gods upon them. I prayed the *fer-de-lances* to come down out of the hills and bite them in their most vital spots. I invited Mount Pelée to erupt again and—

Another hand fell upon my shoulder, and I turned to see the white French officer who had followed me earlier in the day.

"*Vous etes marins?*" he queried. "You air from zee sheep?"

Recalling my earlier story, I nodded. He motioned to his men, who formed a cordon behind me.

"*Marchon!*" he said.

They conducted me straight to the pier, and dumped me into a rowboat. And the boatman, dipping his oars, started for the Danish freighter. It was still broad daylight, and there wasn't a chance that I might slip aboard unnoticed!

CHAPTER VI

BY TRAMP TO "LITTLE ENGLAND"

I

THE situation was one which called for the most delicate diplomacy.

I thought of that red-faced skipper who already had announced a disinclination to carry passengers. He must now be persuaded not only to change his decision, but to accept one on credit with a vague promise of repayment when we reached Trinidad.

In the crisis, I had a happy inspiration. The negro rowing me toward the ship was one of the peddlers who often meet cargo-boats in these ports with fruit, tobacco, and booze for the sailors. From his stock I selected a bottle of brandy, for the purchase of which my last few remaining francs proved barely ample, and with this as a goodwill offering to win the captain's favour, I scrambled up the ladder.

Only, at the top, it was the second engineer who confronted me.

"What you got there?" he demanded.

I showed him, and his face broadened in a grin.

"Py Gott! You are lucky fellow that the old man go ashore yust now! This morning the boads come out mid

cognac, und the captain yust raise hell. 'You come near dis shib,' he say, 'und I break you the bottom in; I feed you to the sharks!' I t'ink it maybe goot idea we hide that in my room."

He led the way aft to a small cabin, where another Dane from the engine-room joined us with corkscrew and glasses. It was the typical cabin of a cargo-boat officer, its plain white walls covered with post cards and photographs. From most of them a pretty young bride of Copenhagen smiled out wistfully, and one sensed her wifely hand in the embroidered sofa pillows and feminine doilies which relieved the crude simplicity of berth and locker.

The brandy, a treat which the vigilance of the captain had denied his men for several days, established an immediate *entente cordiale*. Other officers—Olsen, Petersen, Jonsen, Jensen—dropped in for a brief swig, patted their stomachs appreciatively, and went on about their various duties. The engineers, off watch at the moment, refilled their glasses.

"I t'ink it maybe goot idea we finish this before the skipper come."

"Skoal!"

"Here's how!"

We failed to notice the rattle of the chain as the captain, having returned on board, gave immediate orders to raise anchor. Our first warning was the throb of the engines. Our second was a heavy footfall in the corridor and a loud bang on the door. We had barely time to

conceal the empty bottle before a red face confronted us from the doorway.

"Vat you doing *here?*" the captain bellowed. "I tol' you we tak' no passenger! You blank, blank, blankety stowaway, I make you work, by Yudas!"

II

It was an arrangement than which none could have been mutually more agreeable.

I welcomed any job that would gain me passage to Trinidad, while the skipper, I suspect, was rather pleased to secure additional labor, on an extremely short-handed ship, without expense to his owners.

He did undertake to scare me, and quite successfully, hailing me to his quarters for a third degree, bellowing his disbelief of my personal story in a bull-like voice, and threatening to send me to the stoke-hold. But at the conclusion of our interview he commuted my sentence to a task on deck, touching up the rust with a can of red-lead.

"You paint every spot," he commanded, "before we get to Trinidad!"

That alone seemed a heavy enough undertaking. A hasty glance over his vessel revealed scarcely a single speck of it which was *not* covered with rust. Wherefore I began at the very prow, feeling that there was no alternative but to paint his entire ship.

I was by no means the only person on board, however, who was obliged to earn his keep. Down in the hot depths

of the fire-room a pair of soot-blackened stokers performed the labors of six ordinary men. The engineers, doubling as wipers, came on deck covered with grease. The ship's one cook, aged and stone deaf, not only pottered in his galley from four in the morning until seven at night, but served the table, and scrubbed the pots and pans. The mates, aside from taking their regular turns on the bridge, acted also as bos'ns and supercargoes, and whenever occasion demanded, would wrestle with the freight or holy-stone the deck.

There was little to distinguish the officers here from the lowliest of their seamen. From northern habit, they went about in heavy dungarees and heavier vests, constantly perspiring. The only thing nautical in their garb was an occasional cap, which had quite evidently seen long years of service, and which not infrequently bore the insignia of some far-past rank which its wearer had long since outgrown. The captain alone possessed an immaculate white uniform, but this he reserved for official occasions, when he went ashore to confer with owners or agents. On deck he was much more apt to appear in soiled undershirt, and might often be seen washing his own clothes in a tub behind the chart-room, or even parading about the vessel with a hammer and a saw, performing the duties which on a more fully manned steamer would be delegated to a ship's carpenter.

The very absence of pomp and display, however, proved rather a blessing to me. And the method of my introduction had endeared me at least to the under-officers.

"Don't let dot skipper fright' you," they secretly advised. "He bark more than he bite."

Which proved to be the case. As I sat upon a boom that first evening, painting laboriously, he hailed me from the bridge.

"Say, you, what's-your-name, you tal me you're writing a book? Don't miss dot island over there. Dot's a famous one, Diamond Rock."

He pointed to a sea-girt pinnacle of granite, which stood out clearly against the background of Martinique, its cliffs as sheer as though some mighty hand had cleft them with a knife. To climb that wall seemed an utter impossibility, yet back in 1804 a party of British seamen had not only scaled it, but had dragged up heavy cannon, wherewith they startled French shipping for weeks by their unexpected bombardments. They had christened their stronghold "H.M.S. Diamond Rock," and as such it was entered in the admiralty records.

"Dot's der only island in der British navy," the skipper concluded. "You come oop here early tomorrow morning, I show you Saint Lucia."

III

Thus commenced another week's cruise, through the British Windward Islands.

St. Lucia came floating up with the dawn, a vision of green jungles from which rose the most fantastic of peaks, some in symmetrically contoured cones, others in needles of weatherbeaten rock, and we crept past a bold head-

land into the harbor of Castries, a rival to that of St. Thomas among the fine bays of the Lesser Antilles.

Great Britain had once planned to make this a second Gibraltar, but the fortifications had been abandoned before they were completed, and it survived mainly as a coaling station where, as in the Virgins, the women served as stevedores.

What their husbands did to pass the time was something of a mystery. The fertile garden behind the port seemed comparatively untouched. In the past, to be sure, it had been a somewhat unsavory garden, for St. Lucia, like Martinique, was the home of the *fer-de-lance*. Sudden death lurked everywhere for those who invaded the forest, and Ober tells how a party of amateur explorers, attempting to scale one of the local mountains, were seen to drop one by one as they encountered the vicious serpents. It is little wonder that the blacks formed the habit of gathering in the port, where there was less danger of meeting the pests, and where easier money was forthcoming from the British soldiers of the garrison.

Today the *fer-de-lance* has been pretty well exterminated by the mongoose, a ferret-like little animal which the Britons have imported from India. According to a local advertising booklet, "temperate visitors might remain in the island for years without seeing a snake." The rural regions are safe, and miles of good roadways make them easily accessible; the garrison whose pay-days attracted darkies to the town has been withdrawn; but the negroes still follow the course of least resistance,

loafing about the port whose coal-docks provide employment for the females of the family.

A group of sturdy bucks sat upon the wharf beside us as we coaled, eating something from a tin can labelled, "Builds better babies," and joshing the perspiring women. One caught stray bits of the banter, in that odd dialect of the British islands:

"Whut-a-do, 'ooman? Whut-a-do?"

"Let I be, mon!"

"She vex!"

"Naw, she love I!"

"Dat gel! Ha! She love everybody, she!"

Occasionally, too, one heard a phrase of *creole*, a relic of long-past French invasion. But when the blacks noted a blond head at the ship's rail, they gave immediate evidence that we were in a British colony, where command of a common language afforded a weapon for the persecution of the visitor, and from a dozen throats came the present-day war-cry of the Caribbean:

"One shilling, baas! T'row a shilling, baas! I asking you for one shilling!"

IV

The other Windwards were much the same.

They came parading up across the ocean rim to pass us in review—placid, somnolent little gems, vividly tropical. "Islands quite out of the world," one writer had called them, yet back in the Seventeenth Century they

were prizes which kept France and England at continual loggerheads.

In those early colonial days the Caribbean was Europe's sugar bowl. To the West Indian archipelago came the slave ships from Africa, bringing their human cargoes. Sweating blacks, stung to activity by the lash, hewed down the tropical jungles and tilled the fertile soil. Plantations sprang up throughout the wilderness, and governments on one pretext or another fought for their possession.

Then followed the discovery that sugar could be made at home from such prosaic things as the beet. The West Indian planters found competition difficult against subsidized manufacturers in central Europe. The wars ceased, but the plantations went to seed; mills, falling before the onslaught of age or hurricane, were allowed to lie in ruins; and the islands as a whole experienced a prolonged period of depression from which many of them, despite a later revival of the sugar-cane industry, have never fully recovered.

A second morning found us off St. Vincent, which ranks with Dominica and the French islands for the glory of its scenery. In early times, like the former, it had been a refuge of the Caribs—who seem invariably to have chosen the most beautiful of the Antilles for their last stand—and here, too, they had finally been granted a reservation. But little trace of it remains, for St. Vincent's dominant volcano—another of the many West In-

dian volcanos named "Soufrière"—erupted in 1812 to wipe out all their villages.

Today, in place of the war-like but self-respecting savages, one found it populated with the inescapable throng of poverty-stricken negroes, who apparently profited little from the wonderland in which they dwelt, but expected much from the casual, infrequent visitor.

Then to Grenada, the Windward capital.

In majesty of height it could not compare with some of the others, but its harbor—another landlocked volcanic crater—was strikingly picturesque. The town, mostly of red-tiled houses, perched upon steep slopes which rose abruptly from the water's edge. For a moment it appeared as though the captain had decided not to stop, for we steamed straight past this first section of it, heading for a gap in the rugged hills beyond. But within the gap another bay revealed itself, one of the bluest of all possible bays, with another section of town clustering upon the heights.

It was today the most placid and mirror-like of pools, yet back in 1867 this harbor had been the scene of the most surprising seismic disturbances. Without warning the whole surface of the harbor had receded to reveal new coral reefs; the water commenced to boil; and then, just as suddenly as it had fallen, it rose again to rush upon the surrounding shores, hoisting ships high and dry, although the city, being built upon those hills, escaped with little damage.

These Windwards had indeed experienced their set-



Courtesy of Raymond & Whitcomb

The carenage, Bridgetown



Hindu coolies, Trinidad

backs. But a kindly tropic Nature had long ago healed the wounds. They were charming lands today—lands of potential milk and honey—save that the bees were mostly drones. And in every island of the group they droned only one incessant and tiresome tune:

"Give me one shilling, baas! I asking you for one shilling!"

V

Against a background of West Indian lethargy, the ceaseless toil of my Danish shipmates was the more striking.

Sons of a rigorous northern clime, they must labor in their summer months to store up food and warmth for a long, cold winter. Nineteen officers and men, on a steamer which ordinarily might require the services of forty, they drove their vessel day and night, stopping wherever they saw the possibility of some few dollars' worth of trade. At Kingstown, St. Vincent, we called for arrowroot and cotton; at St. George's, Grenada, it was cacao and nutmegs; and then, although Trinidad lay just ahead, we turned eastward again, to cruise through another moonlit night on a detour to Barbados.

But this was a most distinctive island, quite different from the Windwards.

From its isolation—and it stands well out in the Atlantic, like a sentinel guarding the windward approaches of the Caribbean—one might picture it as a wild and wind-swept rock, battling with gales and hurricanes. Instead,

it proves surprisingly low, consisting (save on its windward coast) of the most gently rolling hills, and the most intensively cultivated hills in the Lesser Antilles.

As we steamed toward its leeward side, it unfolded itself in an almost monotonous vista of cane plantation interspersed only with an occasional hedge of royal palms—"cabbage palms," the unpoetic natives call them—with here or there an antiquated wind-mill dotting its landscape, or an occasional smokestack of a more modern refinery rising aloft like a monument to a progress and prosperity unknown in the other isles.

Unlike its neighbors, Barbados has known no change of masters. Save for an occasional slave uprising or civil war its history is peculiarly lacking in nourishment for the bloodthirsty. From its first colonization, in 1626, it has been undisputedly and loyally English, to such extent that its blacks refer to it proudly as "Little England." Its people, undisturbed even by the buccaneers, have steadily multiplied until some 165,000 of them now occupy its 166 square miles, the most distressingly overpopulated territory in the West Indies. And the resultant struggle for existence—a real necessity here—has given the Barbadian an energy and industry all but unknown among his Caribbean relatives.

Even as we dropped anchor off Bridgetown, the capital and chief port, small boys were rowing frantically toward us in home-made skiffs, crude little diamond-shaped boxes composed apparently of driftwood, which one youth manned while his fellows went overboard to clamor

for our coins. More mature men followed, in more pretentious skiffs, to offer their services as ferrymen, jockeying for a position at our ladder, their bumboats crunching and groaning as they collided with one another in the general maneuvering.

The representative of the Naval Police, who presently took command of the gangway, was quite in his element. He was gorgeous in blue pants, with white coat and sun-helmet; his was all the pomp of the negro in a uniform; and his white teeth fairly glistened as he roared orders at the boatmen, clubbing all who came within his reach. He did manage to establish something of order, and to keep them at a distance until summoned by a prospective patron. But they held their ground, just beyond reach of his stick, trying to catch one's eye, to impress upon one the name of their craft, to exact the promise of one's patronage, or to emphasize the superior merits of whatever sailors' dive they might incidentally represent on shore.

"Hi, you, baas! I taking you shoreward, sah! I showing you where you get plenty to drink! I showing you good time, sah!"

VI

Shore leave in Barbados! I had been there before, but one of the mates was landing in search of recreation, and together we were rowed to the Careenage, or inner harbor, to land at the busiest docks in the Antilles.

After the listless quiet of the previous islands, the rush and bustle of Bridgetown was completely bewildering.

The stevedores seemed fairly falling over one another as they loaded schooners along the pier with hogsheads of rum and molasses. The bright glare of coral streets, the swarm of active humanity, the heat waves, the roar and racket of shouting drivers and the groan of springless carts! And we had barely set foot ashore before we were the center of a host of youths who clamored for appointment as guide or procurer.

It was much the same sort of throng one met at other ports, but the keen competition had taught them the value of more ingratiating manners.

"What ship you from, sah? You Danmark gen'mon? Oh, you Merican gen'mon!"

When I declined their guidance, professing lack of funds, they expressed their appreciation of the jest in much amused cackling.

"Dee mon say he no got money! And he a 'Merican gen'mon! All dee 'Merican mon, he got money in he pocket!"

Their laughter, however, did not ring out in peals or shrieks, like the laughter of Guadeloupe. With all their clamor, one felt a certain restraint in these Barbadians, a quality copied no doubt from their English masters.

And Bridgetown, in many respects, lived up to the title of "Little England." There was a Queen's College; a Broad Street; a Government House; a St. Mary's Church; a Trafalgar Square; a monument to Lord Nelson. The Public Buildings, housing an Assembly second in age only to that of Bermuda among British colonial

parliaments, were most typically British. And even more so was St. Michael's Cathedral, one of innumerable similar Anglican structures scattered through the island, as dignified and untropical a gray stone parish church as one might find in England itself.

The Englishman, however, shunned the port as a place of residence. As evening approached, one saw the sun-helmeted white population pedalling away from the banks and business offices on bicycles, or jolting away in carriages toward the suburban communities—the flower-shrouded village of Bellville, or the seaside resort of Hastings—all set for the nightly round of golf, the peg of whiskey-and-soda, and possibly a dinner in formal evening dress.

Then Bridgetown became completely African, though still with a certain Anglo-Saxon reserve. The men who idled upon the curb, resting after a day's real toil, talked with a negro's propensity for grandiloquent phrases, but with amusing seriousness. I paused to listen to one, who was lecturing another:

"And when you feel dot thirst, my poor weak brudder, make yo' resolution. Make yo resolution. Jus' t'row out yo' chest, mon, t'row out yo' chest, and deny yo'self the temptation of Satan!"

Many girls, often of tender age, went flitting through the dusk in search of their *amours*, as in the French Antilles, yet without the verve and gayety. It was less a lark than a business here; less a pastime than a profession.

"By Gott!" said the mate who had accompanied me

on shore leave. "I t'ink dese place is dead. We find some nigger dance now where dey god a leetle life."

Over-ruling my protest that I was unable to pay my share, he hailed a coach and drove to a place which proclaimed itself a hotel. It undoubtedly had some hotel accommodations in the rear, but its principal room was evidently intended for a dance-hall. There was a raised dais for an orchestra, and at tables around the edge of the floor sat a bevy of girls who ranged in color from near white to nearer black.

They eyed us with an eloquent intensity, but only one of them spoke—a worn and bony creature, lighter than the others.

"I'm Scotch," she said, as though this bit of information might intrigue us.

"Ya," whispered the mate; "she's maybe red leg."

There *was* a colony of Scots on the windward side of the island. Back in the days of the Cromwellian wars, many of them had been sent as exiles to Barbados, to be branded and sold into slavery beside the blacks. Their kilts, exposing knees to sunburn, had earned them their local nickname, and it was still applied today to their descendants, a penniless and despised lot, equivalent to the "white trash" of our own South.

"Don't call her 'red leg,' " the mate cautioned; "she'd hit you mit dot bottle."

But the lassie, although she continued to stare, did not speak again. Except at a distant table, where the crew of some Swedish freighter made unconvincingly merry with

a bevy of yellow girls, the place was as quiet as a Quaker meeting. Even a bawdy house maintained a certain decorum in "Little England." And presently it commenced to rain outside, also with dignity.

The mate beckoned a waitress to refill our glasses.

"Say," he queried, "don't you got no life here? Vhen do dey start der dancing?"

"We don't dance *now*! That's one thing we don't do." She appeared quite shocked. "Don't you know, mon, this is Lent!"

CHAPTER VII

AND SO TO TRINIDAD

I

By the time we turned toward Trinidad, I was feeling very much at home on the Danish freighter.

I had begun to take an artist's pride in the appearance of the fo'castle as it turned scarlet under the red-lead of my brush. And although my work was that of the common sailor, I enjoyed an indefinite social status, dining at the engineers' mess, shaving with the first mate's razor, and smoking the second mate's extra pipe.

They were hard-boiled chaps, these Danes, who had served their time before the mast or in the stoke-hold; their hairy chests were well tattooed with mermaids and flags and anchors; their faces showed the effects of wind and sea; but their light blue eyes were as frank and gentle as those of the youngest babies. They had a certain courtesy, too—a courtesy less polished than that of Latins, but perhaps the more sincere. Even the one or two junior officers whose seafaring experience had not yet brought a proficiency in English made persevering attempts to converse in that language for my benefit, and one soon came to know their thoughts, and their hobbies.

The chief engineer collected postage stamps. It seemed a peculiar pastime for such a giant of a man—he stood

well over six feet, with the muscles of a gorilla—and whenever I caught him poring over his albums I had the same feeling one might experience upon catching somebody at a secret perversion. But he was very proud of his collection; he would beckon me into his cabin, to show me album after album, pointing out rare issues.

“Dot’s Siam, 1843. Only two stamps dot issue in der whole volrd. Der British museum got one. I got der order.”

The second engineer also had albums, half a dozen of them, but filled with additional pictures of the wife and baby whose likenesses covered the walls of his room.

“Dot vive’s pooty, eh? Und der *kinder*. I neffer seen dot child myself. Two years ago we leave Copenhagen, und I t’ink we come home six months. But we go Mar-seilles, we go Suez, we go Calcutta, we go Manila, we go Valparaiso, we go Vest Indies, we go all over der god-dam world. Maybe next trip we go home. I hope so. I bane father two years now und don’t know it, except I get a letter. Maybe I bane father two, three *more* times, und don’t get any letter!”

II

The skipper also improved steadily upon acquaintance, and one soon realized that his gruffness was an affectation.

He held religiously aloof from the others, dining alone in his cabin as a matter of tradition, but he was really a

sociable man, and would sometimes talk to me on deck, taking rather a pride in displaying his knowledge of the islands. He had been born in the Virgin Group when this was the Danish West Indies.

"Ya. I leave Saint Thomas when Danmark sell to United States. Goot bargain for Danmark. Those islands now, they worth nudding, except they got one harbor what America don't want anybody else to get. Maybe she thinks dot's worth twenty-five million dollars. Und the Danes in business, they are all protected by the treaty so they still own everything in the islands. But for the people, that was crime to sell to the United States. Before dot, all they make is bay rum, and sometimes rum mit-out any bay. Und now the Americans bring prohibition. Prohibition!"

He put a surprising amount of emphasis upon the word for one who evidently maintained it upon the ship.

"Ya," he admitted, "Dot's goot on ship." Drunken sailor do much damage, py Yiminy! But on shore? In St. Thomas everybody poor—poorer as in the British Islands, because dey can't make rum. But you go into any shop on der back street, und you can buy all you want—whiskey, cognac. You can't have prohibition in a dry island mit a wet island yoost across der channel. Americans, dey t'ink everybody is like themself. Dey t'ink dey make everywhere progress for everybody, und dey yoost make trouble. Old countries—France, England,—dey know somet'ing."

Often, though, he talked of other islands.

"Saba; you see Saba when you are on dot other steamer? Leetle island near St. Croix?"

That was a funny island. No harbor, no ships, but populated by Dutch seamen. When they grew too old to sail the sea, they went to Saba. They lived on top of the volcanic cone, in a town which they called The Bottom, and liked to sit there in their old age, with a telescope, playing that they still were on the mizzen-mast. In their spare time they manufactured sailing boats from the wood that grew in the crater—very excellent boats—and launched them by sliding them down the side of the volcano into the ocean.

"Und Tobago? Maybe we see Tobago now. Dot island's yoost off Trinidad."

Another queer one. It took its name from the Indian pipe, as did the weed, tobacco. But its chief claim to fame was as the locale of Robinson Crusoe's tale. Alexander Selkirk, the mariner upon whose experience the tale is founded, was marooned on Juan Fernandez, off the coast of Chile, but Defoe chose for his scene "an uninhabited island on the coast of America near the mouth of the great River of Oroonoque," meaning probably Tobago, near the mouth of the Orinoco.

"I stop Tobago once," the skipper grinned. "Und people show me der cave where Robinson live! Ya, dey t'ink it happen. Dey believe every word, yoost like der Bible. Dey show me everyt'ing where Crusoe was. Und every damn nigger on der island t'inks he's direct descendant of Friday."

III

So, in time, we came to Trinidad, that long-sought haven at last.

It was night when we crept through the Bocas, the narrow strait which separates the island from the South American coast. Black, lumpy hills loomed on either hand; beyond them a harbor ashimmer with dancing silver dots; and farther still, the faint lamps of Port of Spain.

It seemed ages before the sun made its appearance, and still more ages before the port authorities came chugging out to inspect us, and countless further ages before a boatman rowed alongside.

"Wait!" called the skipper as I started to descend.

I paused, dreading some unexpected difficulty. But he merely tucked a dollar bill into my hand, and grinned.

"I t'ank maybe you need dot before you sell der book you say you're writing."

The good old tyrant had never really believed my story of cash and baggage awaiting me here. And, landing as I did, some hours before the consulate could be expected to open, I was none too certain of it myself. But I swung off hopefully along the familiar streets—I'd been here before—through the motliest population to be found in the West Indies.

No island on the Caribbean, and perhaps no spot in the Western Hemisphere, is peopled by quite so many varied races as Trinidad. The Spaniards, who first discovered

and colonized it, have left their mestizo offspring. The negro slaves have added their progeny. Venezuelan revolutionists, fleeing across the Bocas, have made it their refuge. Englishmen have settled for business purposes. Chinamen have somehow found their way to its shores. All of them have intermarried, save possibly the Englishman, until the combinations are limitless. And to complete the racial fantasmagoria, the British have imported countless East Indians from the distant Orient.

It is the last element which is most picturesque and striking. Out in their suburb of "Coolie Town" they have their own Mohammedan Mosque and Hindu Temple, much as though it were a little bit of Hindustan. Even on the main streets the ragged mendicants or venders of hammered-brass trinkets ply their trade, and religious fanatics roll crazily in the gutters or pommel their breasts, wailing dismally and weirdly in the performance of some queer rite designed to gain them merit with heathen deities. And although a few of the more progressive menfolk have adopted European dress, the women—pretty creatures in their youth, with peculiarly liquid brown eyes—still stick invariably to the ancestral costume, swathing themselves with voluminous shawls, and decking themselves with anklets and bracelets until the humblest suggests a jewelry store.

The island affords fair space for its polyglot population. It is quite the largest by far of the Lesser Antilles, with an area of more than 2,000 square miles, as compared with the 166 of Barbados. In addition to the agri-

cultural products of the other islands it produces mahogany and other hardwoods; petroleum and various other minerals are found here; and among other resources it boasts the famous "pitch lake" of La Brea, neither pitch nor a lake, but a natural deposit of asphalt which seems to replenish itself as fast as workmen can ship it away to pave the greater part of the world's streets.

The capital, Port of Spain, has also been blessed by providence with a strategic situation at the cross-roads of the shipping lanes from New York to Rio or Buenos Aires and those from Europe to the Panama Canal, and despite a shallow harbor, it is one of the outstanding important ports of the West Indies.

One is not surprised, consequently, to find it something of a city, as Caribbean cities go. The streets are wide, and paved as one might expect to find them in the world's asphalt center. Placards on every lamp-post along the way attest to an Anglo-Saxon interest in hygiene by requesting you not to spit. And the shops, although rather drab of architecture themselves, are fronted by a multitude of gay awnings, each of which proclaims the store behind it to be the best in Trinidad, or shouts some such peppy slogan as, "Give Us a Trial"; while a few of the more up-to-date establishments announce permanently a "Fire Sale!"

The shops, indeed, are a notable feature in Trinidad. Within whatever one you enter, you will find from ten to twenty mulatto clerks to every customer—save possibly on those days when a big cruise ship is in the bay—and they are the most insistently polite of darkies. They wrap

up the smallest trifle very meticulously, and even the pencil which I paused to buy was duly rolled in paper and tied with a string, a neat loop being left so that I might hang it over my little finger, and for the five cent purchase several of the attendants devoted at least ten minutes to the preparation of a receipt, containing not only the amount paid but also a complete description of the merchandise. But with all their formality, they have many worth-while articles to offer—largely the work of local East Indian artisans—and there is no place in the West Indies, or in South America, either, which can compare with Trinidad in attraction for those who travel for the collection of mementos and curios.

There are, of course, *other* attractions, notably the Great Savanna, or Queen's Park, an immense recreation center on the inland side of town. At a surprisingly early hour in Port of Spain the business houses close their doors—often at 4 p. m.—and the entire English population (along with a goodly portion of the negroes) may be seen gravitating toward the park for purposes of football or cricket. The Savanna contains also a race track. About it are many of the city's finest residences and clubs, and the principal hotel; bordering it also are the Botanical Gardens and the Government House; and a drive beyond to any of a dozen different points of interest will reveal the most beautiful tropical scenery we have found in the West Indies.

But—reverting back from my guidebook style—the prosperity of Trinidad is by no means equally distributed

among its inhabitants. The Trinidad Hindu, although his wife may jingle with silver ornaments, is himself the leanest and hungriest-looking of scarecrows. The Port of Spain darkie is every bit as ragged as his fellows throughout the other Antilles. And both of them swarm after an American visitor with the persistence of their relatives throughout the British colonies.

They all know Santa Claus when they see him. He comes to the tropics in a palm beach suit (or sometimes a sport suit); he usually wears brown sun-glasses; and he always carries a camera. And once they spot him, nothing can pry them loose; they follow him throughout the day with that one tiresome appeal:

"I beg you for a shilling, sah! I asking you for one shilling!"

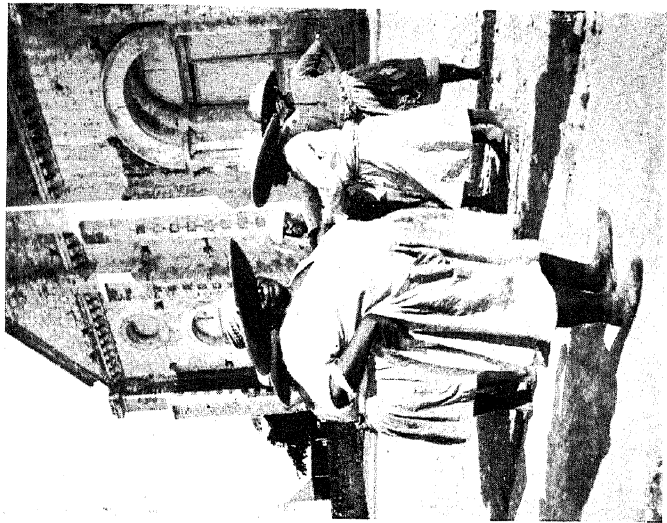
IV

It might be admitted—if I may indulge in a few rambling remarks on the British negroes—that these islands *do* produce their quota of good ones.

I can recall many an old Bermuda coachman, and many a servant in other isles—a soft-voiced, gentlemanly fellow—who served one with deference, and in turn commanded high respect. On various journeys I have met many clerks and minor government officials and others of the educated or semi-educated white-collared class, often in positions of trust and responsibility, whose qualities of courtesy, integrity, industry, and private morality reflected credit upon the Britons



A Dougla girl of Trinidad, half negro, half East Indian



This Trinidad was the sort of place where birth defied control

whose lives they copied. But in general, the rabble one encounters as a traveler in the British West Indies stands out from the populations of other Caribbean colonies as peculiarly offensive.

Perhaps, to a certain extent, the tourist himself is to blame for this. He can't very well chum with the French islanders, who speak an alien tongue. But Mr. Jones, on his brief winter cruise, is invariably delighted with the quaint dialect and the peculiar mannerisms of the British islanders. Good naturedly he submits to being led about by a dozen of them at every port. Cheerfully he tosses a coin to every worthless coon who requests one, until they all expect the same liberality from Messrs. Smith, Brown, and Foster. And in his feeling that he's out for a lark and a holiday, Jones is inclined to jolly his swarm of couriers with a familiarity of manner to which they are not accustomed from their British rulers. It is not surprising that they hail the next visitor as another tractible ignoramus who will distribute manna if merely pestered long enough.

The Englishman, tourist as well as governor, is of a different breed. He knows exactly what he wants; he'll pay for nothing more; and he remains unbending in his dignity. Strangely enough, he comes out from home with little of that racial repugnance toward the negro which the average American feels, although Englishmen born in the islands often have a bit of it. He is accustomed to meeting dark people of the Aryan race in other colonies, and a black skin does not in itself spell "nig-

ger" to him. If he feels superior to the darkie, it is largely as he feels superior to other non-English peoples. Yet in regard to any fraternization, he is far more exclusive than the American. This comes naturally to one who believes that it requires three generations to make a gentleman, and who even among his own people is extremely particular in his choice of associates. He does not exactly snub the negro; he just casually and easily ignores him; and practice at holding other people at a distance has made him a world's champion ignorer.

Some weeks after the conclusion of my last trip I chanced to discuss the whole question with a most charming and intelligent lady, an American by birth who had married an English colonial official. He had served as governor of at least three islands, and they had visited many others. But when I asked her about the British attitude toward negroes, she seemed surprised.

"The color line?"

She reflected a moment.

"It's odd, isn't it, that we never gave it a thought while in the islands? I must have talked with hundreds of other officials and their wives—we were constantly entertaining—yet no one ever seemed to regard the color line as worthy of mention."

"What *did* you talk about?"

"Golf, cricket, literature, affairs of state. But the race problem seemed a settled thing in the British colonies, and scarcely worth discussion.

"The line exists, I would say. I have no recollection,

for instance, of seeing a negro entertained by white men, as exceptional negroes like Booker T. Washington have been entertained at home. It would not be 'unthinkable.' The idea simply would not occur to any one. But because the Englishman is less democratic by nature than the American, I believe that such slights cause far less hurt or resentment in British territory than they would in the United States."

"And how do you think the British negro regards his master?"

"I think that, with a very few exceptions, he adores him. The lower class of negro worships him for his obvious superiority, while to the educated negro, who might be more inclined to desire equality, being British carries a sense of prestige and power. When British blacks go to any other island to live—and they often do, because they reach a competence sooner in non-British lands—they always look longingly forward to the time when they will return to their own. That is the wonderful secret of British domination; her subjects, black and white, are so completely devoted. They may be Australians, West Indians, or whatever they are, and criticize Great Britain until a crisis arises; then they are always British. Like children they may sulk and cry and threaten to rebel at times, but in spite of that, they would rather belong to Britain than enjoy complete independence."

In planning his governmental system, John Bull has had a particularly happy inspiration in the West Indies, and has devised schemes which help to keep his sub-

jects contented. In Barbados and several other colonies, for example, one finds an Assembly whose members are locally elected by popular vote. But the laws upon which the Assembly passes are introduced by an Executive Council, a safe majority of whose members are composed of the Governor, his several assistants (all appointees of the British Crown), and Assemblymen chosen by the Governor. The obvious result of which is that the darkies' representatives vote only on such measures as the Crown deems advisable. Black horses may prance to their hearts' content, but Britain (unlike France in *her* colonies) keeps a tight hold on the reins.

It is a system which, without giving the negro much real power, satisfies his thirst for political self-expression, and makes him feel that he *is* a part of the British Empire. And certainly Britain has no more proud or loyal subjects than those of the West Indies.

This very sense of being British, I believe, explains the wide divergence of types found here—the best and the worst in the Caribbean. In the negro whom nature has blessed with intelligence, it becomes a source of pride which reflects itself in his character, and raises him above others of his race. In the negro whom nature has not so blessed, it instils only a vain conceit, a shallow coating for the African inferiority beneath, and thus produces the omnipresent beggar who follows the tourist about the ports, fawning for effect, yet convinced that by one means or another he can cajole into alms-giving this poor fool

of a foreigner who lacked even the foresight to be born in the shade of the Union Jack.

Often, after visiting British islands—on this and on previous trips—I have wished that the Englishmen would devote less time to cricket and football and more to the sport of lynching. Or that they would at least declare an open season for the benefit of such visitors as cared to bring their shotguns. Yet from their vast experience, they are unquestionably the world's leaders in the art of ruling subject peoples—actually ruling them—and keeping them, with few exceptions, loyal and contented.

v

When the consulate opened in Port of Spain, I found my baggage safely awaiting me. My steward on the steamer had packed up very nicely not only my own possessions but most of those belonging to my room-mate. And the purser had left my travelers' checks, which reestablished my solvency.

It was a day for celebration!

I immediately mailed that old-fashioned nightshirt of mine to the curator of the Metropolitan Museum of Natural History (who never had the courtesy to acknowledge the bequest), and as soon as I was certain that my Danish skipper had come ashore, I slipped out to the cargo boat with several bottles for the friends on board.

Later, when I met the captain himself in town, I returned his dollar.

"Py Yupiter!" he exclaimed. "I t'ank you wass yust plain bum! Are my officers all on dot shib?"

I told him that they were, but did not tell him in what condition.

"Goot!" he chuckled. "I don't like they should see me. Now we yust go oop to der Ice House Hotel and have a few leetle drinks."

CHAPTER VIII

ON THE VENEZUELAN COAST

I

I HAD spent but a few days in Trinidad when another little freighter dropped in.

This vessel, for variety, proved to be Dutch; she was bound most conveniently for Venezuela, Curacao, and eventually Haiti, my ultimate destination; and in contrast to the Danish vessel, she *did* accept passengers.

In fact, she accepted somewhat more than she could comfortably accommodate. Her after deck was festooned with the hammocks of a horde that included Hindus, Chinamen, Guiana boys, Trinidad negroes, and even one old American of the genus Tropical Tramp. And as she crept along the edge of the Spanish Main, poking into every little port along the way, our cabins became overflowing with hosts of Venezuelans—pleasant, agreeable folk ordinarily, but just now a trifle upset by the hurly-burly of embarkation.

In the manner of all traveling Latin Americans they came on board with a most astounding collection of household furniture, personal possessions, and livestock, and the rail was lined with gesticulating individuals who shouted directions to boatmen below, screamed imprecations at clumsy servitors, and went into paroxysms

of terror lest the worthless junk be lost or damaged.

"Oiga! Oiga! That one is mine! Cuidado! Ay! Qué cosa! Carramba!"

There was also the old colored lady who wished to disembark. Down the ladder she went with her arms filled with bundles, which evidently she deemed too precious to be entrusted to the boatmen. But the ladder dipped and plunged as we rolled in a ground-swell, and the action of the waves seemed to create a gust of air that puffed up the old lady's skirt into the semblance of a balloon. She apparently wore nothing underneath, and was greatly embarrassed. She could not hold down the bellying garment, nor would she relinquish her arm-full of bundles. There was no alternative for her but to *sit* upon the steps, which she did, screaming as each lurch of the vessel dipped her bottom in the ocean, yet refusing to move, and effectually blocking the gangway.

Meanwhile up from the rowboats came brooms, cooking utensils, boxes, bales, bundles, barrels. One elderly woman was transporting a velocipede. No one, it seemed, was without a bird cage. The whole deck became a shambles of disordered luggage and distracted luggers, until even the placid Dutch officers tore their hair as they tried vainly to untangle the chaos.

I recalled that somebody had once written—I think it was Arthur Ruhl—that from the moment of starting for Venezuela, one felt like a conspirator. It was destined to prove true. But on this little cargo boat, one also felt like a sardine.

II

In contrast to the Venezuelans, the Trinidad negroes in our steerage appeared almost phlegmatic, and as British subjects they regarded the voluble Latins with an air of conscious superiority.

"Dey's a mos' amusin' people," agreed two of the darkies who had somehow managed to slip ashore to purchase a bottle of rum. "All-a-time we going along de street, everybody go into they house and shut de door."

"Yes, sir," nodded his companion. "An' when we do have passed, they coming out again for looking at we."

"Jes' like crabs," grinned the first.

"Yes, sir; jes' like crabs."

How the pair had managed to get ashore and back again I never learned, for the local officials were strict and fussy. The Republic of Venezuela was rumored to be in the throes of political unrest at the moment, and one could land only with special permission from the Customs House. About a dozen olive-skinned gentlemen with *Resguardo* marked officially upon their hats stood about the ladder and the wharf, staring accusingly at the passengers as though each of us were a prospective revolutionist.

Venezuela has always been addicted to a certain spirit of unrest. It was this land, you will recall, which gave the world such heroes as Miranda and Simon Bolívar, leaders in South America's struggle for independence

from the domination of Spain. And quite possibly it is something of the same quality in the Venezuelans which has also given the country a good bit of political turmoil of the sort which northerners like to describe as "comic opera."

It has known many periods of peace and progress, but usually under the rulership of a stern and autocratic dictator who left no loophole for insurrection. At the moment of my visit, Juan Vicente Gomez was rounding out a presidential career begun in 1908. He had promised his countrymen to retire presently from office and to give the others a chance. But politicians were suspicious and over-eager for the fulfillment of that promise; Gomez had many enemies; and an immigration service always notoriously strict was at this time extraordinarily so.

Corúpano, the first of our ports, was but a colorless and ramshackle town upon a sandy beach, yet one was not allowed to land without a permit from the customs. Throughout the day we idled there, sizzling in the sun; the rails became too hot to touch; the steel sides of the freighter radiated heat; and it was long before evening brought relief.

Then another glorious full moon made its appearance, and from the dark mass of humanity on the after deck came the tinkle of a guitar and a subdued crooning of darkie voices, punctuated by the flap of the canvas shelter overhead; and the black outline of the mountainous

coast slipped lazily past as we steamed on toward other tiny ports.

There was Pampatar, on the island of Margarita, noted for its pearl fisheries, where the fishermen became our stevedores for a day but kept in practice by diving for our coins. Then Cumaná, where cargo went ashore through the surf on the heads of sturdy brown natives. Then Guanta, reached by a tortuous passage among the sea-carved rocks, and backed by hills covered with giant cactus.

Most of these places seemed scarcely worth the visit—and larger mail liners were inclined to pass them by—yet surprising amounts of freight went ashore in exchange for sugar or cotton or coffee or cacao. And surprising hordes of new passengers came aboard to swell the number already on deck.

At the table, designed for only a dozen diners, each seat was occupied at four P. M. by a gentleman waiting patiently to be the first served at a six o'clock dinner. By the time the meal made its appearance, all were ravenous. Those who could not reach the platter with their fingers proved remarkably adept at spearing with fork or knife, delivering the fatal thrust with all the expertness of the trained *matador*.

It was a crisis, perhaps, which tended to strain even the traditional courtesy of Latin-America. But the kindly good nature of a tropical race was never far in the background. When someone started a victrola in the salon, a

dark-eyed *señorita* at the table suddenly astonished the rest of us by bubbling into tears and shaking with heart-rending sobs. Immediately all ceased eating to ply her with sympathetic questions.

"Ah, it is the music, *sí*? She has just been disappointed in love? *Pobrecita chiquitita!*"

From everyone came murmurs of pity and consolation. A stout and bibulous-looking gentleman offered his own lace handkerchief. Several other ladies commenced to sob, and the weeping became so general that one felt it positively impolite to refrain from the chorus. Like a practical-minded *gringo* I finally stopped the phonograph which had induced the sentimental mood. (The record, incidentally, was none other than that old tune, Yip, I-addy, I-ay, I-ay!") And five minutes later they were chatting and laughing merrily, quite as though nothing had disturbed the prevailing good nature.

III

One needed a lot of *that*, or at least of patience, on this voyage, for conditions grew steadily worse.

So did manners.

The Latin, either in Europe or in South America, is seen to far better advantage in the drawing room than in the dining room, particularly in one that is grossly over-crowded. Whatever special delicacies the mess-boy brought us were snatched from the plate before he could set it down. Distrustful of the supply, the first arrivals would invariably load their dishes with far more than

they could hope to eat, and would fill their pockets with fruits and cakes, until the waiter was obliged to dole out his desserts.

This greatly offended the Venezuelans, who deemed it an affront to their honor or something, and they kept up a running chatter of abuse and complaint, until the steward flushed through the chocolate brown of his skin. "That black fellow," they contemptuously called him. Yet he was no darker than most of those whom he served. In Caracas and other interior towns, the people are predominantly Spanish, but those of the coast show a goodly dash of the tar-brush which has splotched the entire rim of the Caribbean. Furthermore the Venezuelans, descendants as they are of fighters rather than of courtiers, are notably more crude than most South Americans; this little freight boat, scorned by those who could afford to await the larger mail steamers, had few real aristocrats among its passengers; they were keenly sensitive to the fact that officers and stewards held them in low esteem, and in their resentment they radiated an ugliness seldom found among the people of their continent.

"Dey's an awful unmannerly folk!" the waiter, a Dutch Guiana boy, confided to me. "Ah'll be mos' awful glad when we get some white men in dis cabin."

At the moment, however, the only other passenger whom the boy classed as such was the old Tropical Tramp on the after deck.

He was a type familiar to the southern continent, a prospector by trade, who wandered aimlessly and fruit-

lessly from country to country, working at construction jobs, seeking gold mines, enjoying life but accumulating few of its material rewards. After ten years in South America he spoke scarcely a word of Spanish. He often lay in his deck hammock with a grammar and phrase book on his lap as evidence of good intention, but somehow he never got around to studying them. Some day he expected to do so, just as some day he hoped to reap his fortune.

"There's time enough," he sighed. "I've never had much luck, so far, but I'm seein' the world. That's the thing to do, my boy, when you're young."

By day the Venezuelans were also disposed to sleep, but invariably they sat up throughout the night to talk at the top of their lungs.

One could scarcely blame them for this reversal of program, for the nights were often cool, and they shivered in the filmy clothing which tropical dwellers wear. Vacant beds, of course, were even scarcer than table seats. A few had blankets; the rest wrapped themselves in whatever they could find, until the long row of recumbent figures muffled in bath-towels rather resembled a morgue.

Having been among the earliest to embark, I was fortunate in the possession of a stateroom. According to the very vivid Dutch phraseology it was known as "Hut 16." Where the other fifteen huts were situated, I never discovered, for they seemed to have been added as an afterthought, tucked into odd corners wherever space

permitted, and my own was just abaft the galley where the fat blond cooks eternally peeled potatoes. But humble though it was, I felt decidedly ungallant to occupy it while the ladies shivered on deck.

"Vat you care?" laughed the purser, when I mentioned it to him. "You do not asg them to come on board! Neither do I. They know we god no room."

As we left Guanta, however, the wind blew up with added chill. And one could scarcely refuse a bridal couple. They walked so helplessly and miserably about, arm in arm, a pair of youthful Venezuelans, married just prior to our sailing and obviously upon a honeymoon. When they approached me with the request, I agreed.

"Only," I stipulated, "I'd like to use the room occasionally in the daytime."

They beamed with joy as they heard the glad news. They paused just long enough to open a trunk and extract therefrom a pink silk nightie and a pair of sky-blue pajamas. Then they slammed the door in my face, and bolted it, and kept it bolted throughout the rest of the voyage.

IV

So, eventually, to La Guaira, gateway to the Venezuelan capital.

It was a familiar sight—that red-roofed city at the foot of a stern brown ridge of mountain—and I had made the trip to Caracas on previous occasions. But

Caracas must appear in my guidebook, and the data must be brought up to date, so I approached the official at the gangway for permission to go ashore.

"Name?" he asked.

I pointed it out on a passenger list in his possession.

"No!" he almost shouted. "*No puede bajar! You can't go ashore!*"

A trifle surprised, I pursued the question farther. It seems that, since I was the only surviving first-class passenger from Trinidad, my name was among those of several third-class passengers, who were *not* permitted to land. A higher official, glancing over the list, had evidently instructed this guardian of the republic that the first twenty were excluded. My class was clearly printed after the name, but this jackanapes was unable to read.

I enlisted the efforts of every one from the captain down, and after much furious argument, the officer consulted some one of superior authority and returned with permission. But while I hurried away to procure my hat, the guard was changed; before me stood a new man equally insistent that I remain on board; and the whole battle must be reënacted.

By the time I persuaded officials to let me ashore, I was really regretting that I didn't have a bomb or two in my possession. But once in an automobile and racing up the mountain road toward Caracas, one soon forgets all grievances toward Venezuela.

Just outside La Guaira another zealous official stopped me to take my name and telephone it ahead, but there



The roofs of Caracas



The landing, Curaçao

was no further molestation, and we roared up the winding highway, across rocky gorges, over steep trestles, and along cliffs where a mis-turn of the wheel meant a plunge into eternity. In general the vegetation of the windswept heights was limited to cactus; the flat-roofed houses with goats about their doorsteps were reminiscent of old sunday-school pictures of the Holy Land; but from time to time an interior valley unrolled itself in a riot of verdure, and behind us the blue Caribbean crept higher into the heavens with the peculiar effect of altitude, blending until one could scarcely tell where the sea had ended or where the sky began.

Along the way signposts advised one in Spanish to drive slowly and toot the horn, and one of them preached the most eloquent of wordless sermons—a battered old automobile mounted upon a tall stone shaft, without inscription or printed moral. My driver *did* toot the horn, but he never slackened speed. His was the fastest car in Venezuela, he assured me, and then proceeded to prove it, passing all competitors in a swirl of reddish dust, and pausing only for the sentry who checked my name again as we raced into the suburbs of Caracas.

The city had changed but little in the three years since I had seen it before.¹ It was still a fascinating vision of many-colored houses, of steep alleys, of irregular *quebradas*, of quaint churches or chapels perched on hill-tops, of sidewalks that refused to stay level with the

¹ Caracas is covered by the author in "A Tropical Tramp with the Tourists." Dodd, Mead & Company.

streets they bordered, of lurid advertisements of next Sunday's bullfight, of snappy army officers in olive drab, who twirled their mustachios and ogled slim-ankled *señoritas*—a most pictorial city, yet with a very real bustle of high-powered autos raging through its narrow lanes while their drivers filled the air with the raucous screechings of higher-powered claxons.

The old yellow University was still covered with pencil marks where students had worked out their geometry problems on the hallowed walls, and the students themselves still wore their dark skull-caps, vaguely resembling the Basque head-gear, and twiddled foppish canes. The Cathedral, the Capitol—everything seemed unaltered. Only the President's Palace on Miraflores Hill showed some suggestion of the present emergency in the unusual number of its guards. In its gateway some forty brown soldiers sat on a bench, each with a rifle in his hands, while in two or three adjacent buildings were other detachments, all quite obviously in readiness for trouble.

There had been a few revolutionary demonstrations here within the past week, I learned, but today Caracas was quiet. Or perhaps one should say peaceful, for quiet seemed unknown in these narrow streets whose massive walls hurled back the roar of the auto horns, echoing them and amplifying them.

The hotel in which I put up for the night was also equipped with unusual acoustic properties. The active little fat man in the room opposite, who made it his practice to stamp down the hall and back every fifteen min-

utes, aroused premeditations of murder. I waited with set teeth for the loud SLAM of a door which invariably concluded his performance. And just as I was about to doze off into slumber, there came through the window the unmistakable sound of popping corks.

It originated apparently in the interior *patio* below, and as I peered down, I discovered that a party of some sort was getting under way.

"*¡Sí, señor,*" explained a drowsy servant whom I summoned. "It is a reception to a bride and groom who have just arrived from Guanta."

Ye Gods! That couple which had locked me out of my own cabin on the steamer!

I already felt a distinct grievance toward them, which grew steadily as their reception progressed. Six servants had chosen the spot beneath my window for chopping ice, and it seemed to me that they chopped enough of it to keep Washington from crossing the Delaware. The corks popped incessantly as though the bottles were filled with liquid dynamite. And as guests continued to arrive, and wine to flow, and conversation to bubble, the din became indescribable. Were it not for the fact that the celebrants were all in faultless evening dress, one might easily have mistaken it for a gang-fight, particularly when the "empties" were consigned to a rapidly growing pile with explosion after explosion and a constant tinkle of broken glass.

In the room next door some fellow-sufferer was driven to distraction. He leaped out of bed, and commenced to

beat a rat-tat-tat with a pair of shoes against the boards of the partition.

"Shut up!" he cried in English. "For ——'s sake, shut up!"

I obeyed a similar impulse by pounding upon my wash-basin and shouting the same sentiments. Two minutes later he appeared at my own door—a strapping, red-faced American of the mining-man type, clad in a pair of baggy pajamas, and armed with a whiskey flask.

"Join me in a drink?" he invited.

He introduced himself and sat down.

"Gawd, what a night! It's no wonder they have revolutions in this damn country. For ten cents, I'd start one myself."

He rambled on, at considerable length anent the Venezuelans.

"They're nice enough, these fellows, when you meet them socially. Come down in a plug hat, like an ambassador or something, and they're lovely. But it's all on the surface. They've got no real consideration for one another, and they're grasping. Give 'em a chance, and they'll take everything they can lay their hands on. Put 'em in office and they'll hold it until some one throws 'em out. Revolutions are inevitable.

"They had one, sort of a one, last week. I was sitting in the plaza when it started. A bunch of those sissie-looking students from the university made a demonstration under Bolívar's statue—speeches about liberty and

that sort of stuff. When the police objected, they began to chuck stones. The cops fired on 'em, and shot a few, and arrested a lot of others. But they're not such sissies as they look, those college boys. They came back later and lynched six policemen."

He finished the flask, and betook himself off to make another attempt at sleep.

"And there'll be more trouble yet. There always *will*, among these Venezuelans."

There was. A few days after my visit, the press carried dispatches announcing that a battalion of troops at the Miraflores barracks had revolted, precipitating a two-hour fight between loyal and rebellious soldiers. But such items from Venezuela are scarcely big "news." And in justice to the Venezuelans, one might mention that the dispatches were rather lost among the tales of gangfights in Chicago.

v

I came back to the ship, to find that the old tropical tramp, although he had intended to disembark at La Guaira, had been balked by official red tape.

His passport, his vaccination certificate, and his visa, were all in order, but he had neglected one or two of the many formalities which Venezuela requires of others than one-day tourists. He had neglected to provide himself with a reference from his last employer, or proof that he suffered from no mental derangement, or an affidavit to

the effect that he did not intend to disturb the peace or compromise the international relations of the republic.

“It’s all right,” he said, philosophically. “I’ll find some gold or something in Curacao. I’m seein’ the world while I’m young, anyhow. I ain’t quite sixty yet.”

CHAPTER IX

OSTRICHES AND OIL

I

WHEN we finally left La Guaira, the ship seemed strangely quiet.

The cabins were still filled, but mainly with moon-faced Dutchmen bound for Curacao. There was also an American mining engineer and his family. And a bewhiskered Frenchman known generally to the others by the title of "Old Pop."

Old Pop, it developed, was in the monkey business. He imported the simians for a pet-shop in New York, along with many tropic birds, and on this occasion he was also bringing home a twelve-foot boa-constrictor. He recounted its capture, gesticulating with fork and knife, and mumbling through a mouthful of food.

One night, while in a small village on the Orinoco, it seems, he had been awakened by a great commotion in the hen-house. The natives, greatly excited, were sure that it indicated the presence of a snake. A light revealed no such invader, yet the chickens were squawking frantically, and flying in terror about the roost. Only one old hen, engaged in setting, appeared unperturbed. Pop was about to conclude his search for the reptile when it occurred to him to lift the hen from her nest. And there

lay the snake. It had eaten all her eggs, curled up, and gone into an after-luncheon coma, and the faithful old setter was still setting peacefully, on the snake!

II

An overnight run from La Guaira brought us to the last of our Venezuelan stops, at Puerto Cabello.

Save for its size, as the second most important of the country's ports, it had little more distinction than its predecessors. The streets were thick with dust; the houses were low and monotonous; and there was little attraction except in the many saloons which proclaimed themselves to be "The American Bar" or "The New York Bar" or, in one case, "La Ley Seca," which, interpreted, meant nothing less than "The Dry Law!"

They were neither dry nor American, however. Upon the walls one found the Spanish version of many familiar advertisements, but "I'd *walk* a mile for a Camel" was here transformed into "I'd *go* a mile," in deference, obviously to the Latin American distaste for travelling far on foot. One noted that nearly every one in town, whether he owned a horse or not, carried a riding crop instead of a cane, as though to prove himself a *caballero*. (The Spanish term, synonymous with "gentleman," primarily means a "horseman.") And opposite the Camel slogan another bright advertiser had invariably hung up a placard which advised the populace: "Go there in the new Ford."

With this, however, the local pep appeared to cease. A Sabbath calm pervaded the place, which at mid-day

seemed almost deserted. Now or then through an open window, one glimpsed a typical Spanish parlor, with chairs arranged in rows along the wall, with countless photographs of friends and relatives set formally upon a marble-topped table, and with the same fancy white doily draped over the piano, at which, invariably, one *señorita* sat practicing the same morning exercises which the young lady next door was practicing, and hitting the same identical false notes. But the town did possess a band, presumably a naval band, which presently made its appearance upon the deck of a rusty old gunboat beside which we lay, and played the Venezuelan national anthem throughout the afternoon, accompanying it with an endless thumping of an exceedingly tinny drum.

A young Dutch passenger, seated beside me on the steamer, called my attention to the little warship.

"The Venezuelan navy," he grinned.

He had just come from the Maracaibo oil-fields, farther west than Puerto Cabello.

"You have been Maracaibo?" he asked. "Then don't go. It is too much 'boom town.' Ten years ago there is nothing in the place but alligators. Then we foreigners come—Dutch, American, English—to dig oil wells. From a port much more sleepy than this Puerto Cabello, we make it a busy place. The population grow to 40,000; in three years more to 120,000. We take out now about forty million barrels of oil each year, and bring big taxes to the government, but the Venezuelans hate us for it.

"They can not do it themselves. They are not or-

ganizers. They are glad to give concessions to the foreigner. But when he comes, it makes them mad to see him getting rich. They want always then to raise higher the taxes.

"In Maracaibo they say the foreigners have increased the cost of living. They forget that the workman's wages have gone up from \$1.50 to \$7.00 a day. And they make higher the prices for us. It is forty cents for a glass of beer. They have a price for every face. The government collects on everything. If you want to have a private dance, you got to buy a permit. The government makes its commission on every box of matches. And when you die, you have to pay the government to be buried in the cemetery.

"Venezuela? It is very silly country. It is country that needs development. But when you come to develop, it makes all sort of obstacle. I go now to Curacao, where the government has more sense."

III

Another morning found us steaming upon this Curacao, the little Dutch island just off the Venezuelan coast.

It was a low and unimpressive bit of land, with only the merest tint of olive to relieve its bare brown sand. After a cruise through the Lesser Antilles, it seemed most plain and uninteresting. Yet the city which loomed before us—the port of Willemstad—was distinct and different from anything in the West Indies.

Quaint houses lined the waterfront, with walls of many

colors. They rose slimly and steeply, in irregular ranks, like strings of roysterers coming home from a spree, standing shoulder to shoulder as though in a common effort to keep from tumbling down. Their roofs, once red but splotched today with the black of age and weather, curled quaintly and Dutchly at the eaves, with countless peaks and gables.

It was a bit of Holland, even to its canals. As we steamed toward the principal channel, which opened from the sea, a pontoon bridge swung aside. The tiny launch which served as one pontoon made answer to our own hoarse whistle with a shrill shriek of its own; smoke belched from its diminutive funnel; and away it chugged, carting the whole bridge with it and carrying it around until it stood level with the banks. Our "thank you" blast echoed back from the walls of the little Dutch forts on either side, and we plowed into the heart of the city through the narrow, fifty-yard-wide channel, to sail as it were up Willemstad's principal street.

Yet it was a very busy street—lined with rows and rows of ships, which flew the flags of many nations—and the Dutch today were rather proud of their metropolis on this desolate little isle.

Time was, in the distant past, when the Netherlands were something of a power on the Caribbean Sea, and many a Dutch admiral roamed farther south to seize upon extensive territories in what is now Brazil. In fact, the Hollanders captured far more territory than a small country with a limited soldiery was able to garrison and hold.

Wherefore, from the great scramble which marked the Seventeenth and Eighteenth centuries, Holland emerged with but little of genuine value. At present its banner floats over only a few small, scattered islands of which one seldom hears, and until quite recently Curacao itself was of interest mainly to Venezuelan revolutionists, who found it a convenient place for the hatching of their plots, and an even more convenient refuge when their expeditions failed.

When, however, there came the boom in the oil-fields of Maracaibo, already mentioned, the Dutch were quick to take advantage. Maracaibo, although but an overnight sail from Curacao, was somewhat off the steamer lanes, while Willemstad lies directly in the path of all the vessels that operate from Europe via Trinidad to the Panama Canal. The Shell group, interested in the Maracaibo fields, established vast refineries on Curacao. Barren as the rest of the island may be, Willemstad today has become a most important fuelling station, and one of the leading maritime centers of the Caribbean. And when, after steaming through its maze of ancient Dutch canals, we emerged upon an inner lagoon, it was to find before us a vision of countless huge oil tanks, extending in hundreds and hundreds back into the interior of the island as far as the eye could follow.

IV

I landed in Willemstad, half expecting, in view of its growing commerce, to find it unpicturesque.

But the old Dutch streets at the harbor-front were very little changed. As crazy almost as the curving gables which overshadowed them, they twisted erratically in all directions. Now or then some moderately wide thoroughfare traced a stately and fairly wide course, but from it branched many smaller lanes scarcely eight feet broad at their best, and often so narrow that, as previous travelers have remarked, a pair of lovers in houses facing one another could hold hands from the upper windows.

As though to add to complications, there were also the canals. At either edge of the bridges which spanned them an official collected tolls from those who chose to pay. If one happened to be barefoot, the charge was a Dutch penny; if one happened to be a shoe-clad plutocrat, the fare was double. Yet the cheerful, easy-going collectors seldom glanced at one's feet; so far as I could see, they took whatever was given them; and before I discovered that any payment was expected, I crossed and recrossed a dozen times and paid them nothing at all.

The streets, in name, were all very Dutch—Breede Straat, Heeren Straat, Kuckenstraat. The shops, on the contrary, proclaimed a variety of nationalities. The Boekhandel Sluyter rubbed shoulders with the Bazaar Frances; the Botica Nueva with the Yellow House. Despite Curacao's nationality, the people themselves were greatly mixed. One met swarthy Venezuelans, slant-eyed Chinamen, gaunt Hindus, blacks and mulattos of every description, and stokers from a hundred ships and almost as many countries.

To the great majority of the natives the local speech was a dialect known as *papiamento*, a language compounded of Spanish and Dutch, with additional phrases from the African. In the city, however, they were all accomplished linguists, speaking many tongues, and the lanes resounded with as many dialects as the Tower of Babel itself.

Far from the least important element here, too, was the Hebraic. Many Portuguese and Spanish Jews had somehow reached this Curacao, to thrive and multiply; to them belonged the principal banks and business houses; to them the finest residences which lined the Pietermaay, the one broad handsome boulevard bordering the beach; and their descendants today were abundant enough to support two fine, huge synagogues.

The Dutch, instead of discouraging immigration, had opened this port to all the peoples of the world; instead of taxing everything in sight, they admitted goods free of duty; and as a result, Willemstad, with all its dilapidated picturesqueness, was a far busier place than any of the Venezuelan cities found just across the Strait, and its narrow, six-foot lanes resounded with the hum of traffic and trade.

v

It is undoubtedly trite to remark of an island that its existence is of the sea, yet this is so strikingly true of Curacao that one might even emphasize it.

The very drinking water is reclaimed from the ocean

by means of a filtering system. The island itself is so very dry, with rains that fall for only a few weeks a year and which sometimes skip a season, that it sustains but little life. Outside of Willemstad, where nine-tenths of the population live to profit from the shipping trade, the only product is a bitter orange whose peel, when shipped to Holland, is used in making the "curacao" cordial, while the only livestock which seems to thrive here, except for the goat, is—strange as it sounds—the ostrich.

Some fifteen years ago a Dutchman named Lens came here from his native Transvaal, bringing a shipload of these South African birds with him, to establish a local farm. In this dry climate they found a home not so very different from their own accustomed habitat. They multiplied, although somewhat less prodigiously than the human population, and today this farm, aside from furnishing an industry, is the principal tourist sight.

With a party of other passengers I drove out to it over several miles of sand. Habitations were few in this desolate, ugly country. Save for hedges of ragged cactus, the only vegetation was a growth of low mimosa trees, all bent westward as the result of prevailing winds—a prickly growth whose counterpart, in Palestine, formed Jesus' crown of thorns. But at length we came to a series of cactus-fenced inclosures, above which projected many snaky necks, and several pairs of beady eyes surveyed us curiously.

Meinherr Lens himself came hurrying forward, to greet us in excellent English, and to talk about his flock.

It is only by constant care that the ostrich can be raised in captivity. Although classed as a bird, he has many of the anatomical peculiarities of a prehistoric reptile, and a digestive system which has outlived the period for which it was intended. In his early months—when he appears as a fluffy little fat chicken—he is raised on eggs and lettuce, the latter cut into minute pieces by his keepers. The parents must be separated from their offspring, for even the adults are clumsy and stupid creatures, quite apt to step upon their children, and certain to eat up all the food. Even in the wild state, on the plains of the Transvaal, only 70 per cent. of the ostriches born ever reach maturity, and in the pens of Curacao the mortality rate runs higher.

In many other respects these were funny birds. Slow to form attachments, the male must be kept in a pen adjoining that of his prospective mate for some months previous to the mating season, but when Cupid finally touched his heart, he became a loyal and dutiful spouse, and during the forty-two day period of incubation, the male took his turn at setting, going on duty religiously every evening, to be relieved by his wife at daybreak.

As Mr. Lens led the way toward the show-rooms he paused before one enclosure to point out a pair of his wards. The male, recently plucked, looked inartistically naked, and he stood at a distant corner of his pen, seemingly ashamed and self-conscious; dejection was written in every line of his pose; his whole body drooped disconsolately, and his face was a picture of sorrow.



Courtesy of Hamburg-American Line

In Curaçao one found a mixed and polyglot population exceeding
even that of Trinidad

"Ah, no," said Lens, "it is not the loss of his feathers. He is grieving for his wife. Two years ago his last wife die, and always he is grieving."

He shook his own head, sadly.

"I do all I can. I give him for another mate the finest in my flock. And I leave her with all her feathers, to make her look more beautiful. But still that fellow will not look at her."

The lady in question seemed none too pleased about it. From time to time she surveyed her spouse with a scornful expression. Then, with a disgusted toss of her head, she walked jauntily across the arena in a peculiarly camel-like gait, and pecked at the nearest fence-post.

"You see?" said Lens. "We have here no companionate marriages!"

At the show-rooms, where the tour concluded, he proceeded to sell us all an arm-load of fans and plumes. But as we whirled away toward town again, with depleted pocketbooks, I felt that my purchases were something more than just mere curios. They stood for the sanctity of the home and the dignified old-fashioned domestic fidelity. And they also bore tribute to the Dutchman's genius for discovering a means of livelihood on a worthless desert island.

VI

It was dusk when we returned to Willemstad, and the old Hollandische city had undergone an amazing transformation.

The shops, which occupied the basement floors, were all closed tight and bolted. But the upper stories were gay enough. From their windows—those windows from which lovers could hold hands with one another across the street—came the rattle of many tin pianos. And in every doorway stood a painted lover, dark except for the splotches of bright carmine on her cheeks. What had been a business section by day was now a red-light district.

Which probably only goes to prove that you can not beat the Dutch. On this last little remnant of a Caribbean empire, they had contrived to reap a harvest from the sea. To the ships they sold fuel; to the passengers, plumes; to the seamen, the comforts of home.

CHAPTER X

THE HAITIAN CAPITAL

I

It was on the fifteenth day from Trinidad that the island of Haiti appeared upon the horizon.

It rose in a vague and misty blur at sun-up, and grew into a bulky mass of sky-high, tumbled mountain, framed in clouds of ash and silver, against which the heights stood out in sombre solitude.

Only when one noted the tininess of the thatched houses upon its beach did one appreciate the vast proportions of its chaotic hills. Throughout the day we steamed along its ragged coast, past headland after headland, and evening found us still circling its great southwestern peninsula, in the lee of its lofty peaks.

Then, indeed, it became superbly awesome.

The night seemed almost to rise from the water, creeping upward in great shadows among the gullies and ravines, darkening the hamlets, the foothills, the peaks themselves, until the whole mass of mountain stood out black against the sky. And now, from cañons which had seemed quite uninhabited by day there came the glow of many crimson fires, their blaze reflected in palls of strangely luminous smoke.

"Voodoo fires!" thought the more romantic of our passengers.

Most of us scoffed. Yet there was a mystery, a sort of magic in those flames among the black hills, which carried one back to Haiti's dramatic past—to the days when the slaves revolted to slay their white French masters, when drums echoed through the tropic forest to proclaim strange Congo rites, when illiterate generals fought their way to pomp and power through decades of murder and intrigue unparalleled in Caribbean annals.

II

As we crawled on along that ominous coast, one thought of Haiti's story.

Upon its northern shore Columbus had landed in 1492 to establish the first fortress in the New World, and upon its southeast coast there had presently grown up the city of Santo Domingo, in its time the greatest of Spanish strongholds on the entire Caribbean. But this western part of the island—the part which now is Haiti—lay idle until a band of French pirates, driven from the seas by the fleets of the Dons, landed near Cape Haitien to form the nucleus of a French colony.

From the first it prospered far more than the contiguous Spanish territory. The Frenchmen, instead of hunting for gold, planted coffee and cotton, and made much progress in the construction of roads and bridges. And as the colony grew, they imported more slaves from Africa, until the white planters were but a mere handful

in a swarm of blacks, and were forced to bully their slaves unmercifully to hold them in subjection.

Not always, to be sure. They had their dark-skinned mistresses, these early colonists, and many Frenchmen not only freed their mulatto offspring, but gave them an education. Yet this in itself produced a further menace—a class of mulattoes who read of the French revolution at home, and pondered France's new proclamation, which informed them that all men had been created equal.

Slaves, escaping to the hills, formed marauding bands to prey upon the plantations. Even in the towns black patriots raised their voices. The settlers, fully alarmed now, tried vainly to suppress such movements. In the central square at Cape Haitien, then the capital, negroes were broken at the wrack, or even burned alive. But the storm was gathering. And France herself, becoming involved in wars with Spain and England, was obliged when a British force invaded the island, to enlist many of the Africans in her service and train them in arms!

From this conflict rose Toussaint l'Ouverture. First a slave, later a fugitive, and finally a commander of his fellow blacks, he played a leading part in expelling the British, and became the Military Governor of the island. France, having heaped the honors upon him, became fearful of his power. Napoleon dispatched his brother-in-law, Leclerc, with a fleet to depose the black leader. . . . It was then that the deluge broke.

L'Ouverture was trapped—seized by treachery when he trustingly accepted an invitation to a parley—but Jean

Jacques Dessalines and other leaders promptly appeared. The negroes everywhere turned upon their masters. There was no stopping the onrush of the blacks. Chafing from the lash of former years, crazed by their new freedom, they swept through the streets of the cities, pillaged the estates, dragged white men from their hiding places, taunted them, flayed them, tortured them. Leclerc's forces dwindled with fever; Leclerc himself died; and in 1803 France withdrew.

Thus was born the "Black Republic," and the melodrama attendant upon its birth was destined to continue. Dessalines, becoming president, promptly declared himself "Emperor," and was assassinated by his generals. Followed Christophe, who styled himself "King." And thereafter many another leader who ruled by fear and force until deposed by revolution. Some of them were ignorant men, unable to sign their names to their tyrannical decrees; more than one of them lived in secret terror of the island's many voodoo priests, the sorcerors of African witchcraft; and although an occasional president stood out as intelligent and patriotic, he usually fell a victim to the intrigues of his military commanders.

Thus the roads and bridges which the French had built fell into disuse and decay; the national bank notes became mere worthless promises; insurrection became the country's only profitable industry; and as late as 1913, Stephen F. Bonsal in *The American Mediterranean* told how a Haitian senator, resenting foreign comment upon the revolutionary habits of his countrymen, protested:

"Why, for the last eight days not a shot has been fired in earnest!"

Even now, as one steamed along the coast past its mysterious black hills, this country looked dramatic. But fifteen years had brought a change, and the breaking of another dawn revealed a different Haiti.

Where the fancied "voodoo fires" blazed, the natives were merely burning jungle to clear the ground for planting. We maneuvered shoreward toward a rather pretty town among the coco-groves, its size quite dwarfed by the amphitheater of mountains. Countless little fishing boats passed us, putting out to sea, each manned by three or four natives of the deepest ebony hue, and monkey-like boys, as at other ports, swam out to dive for coins. On the wharf another host of darkies, in gay red caps which might well have graced generals in some long-past revolution, waited for our baggage. And I swung ashore at Port-au-Prince to find it one of the most promising cities in the whole of the West Indies.

III

To one who had read of the older Haiti, it was something of a surprise.

According even to some fairly recent writers, the local towns were in extremely ramshackle state, devoid of modern improvements, and scarcely habitable for the few white men who, for some obscure or inexplicable reason, might choose to live in such an earthly purgatory.

Which may have been true enough before 1915. But

in that year the United States Marine Corps stepped in to halt a revolution, and decided to remain. In its wake had come doctors and engineers, mostly from the American navy, although technically in the employ of the Haitian government. And as a result of their labors such cities as Port-au-Prince were not only habitable, but rapidly becoming presentable.

From the wharves one emerged upon the Rue du Quai, with its dazzling white City Hall and other public buildings; just beyond, one found a pair of handsome new banks, whose local bills, known as *gourdes*, were no longer empty promises; and the wide, well paved streets which led inland proved the best this side of Trinidad.

Yet much remained of the older Haiti for the entertainment of a visitor who would seek the picturesque.

In fact, the new improvements, far from spoiling the local color, served rather to set it in higher and clearer relief. The sidewalks which bordered many of the widest and smoothest streets were still broken and irregular, full of queer breaks and sudden changes of elevation. Among the stone structures of the later era were countless woe-begone and weatherbeaten shanties of unpainted wood, their Frenchly fancy balconies and cupolas mere futile pretenses at architectural grandeur. And across the finest of the boulevards there surged the same pageant of bare-foot negroes who must have paraded the mucky thoroughfares of Toussaint l'Ouverture's day.

It was too bewildering, that pageant, for more than a confused jumble of first impressions.

Negroes, negroes, negroes! Short fat ones! Tall, slim gawky ones! Stalwart black women in glowing dresses of vivid yellow or blue. Women on donkeys, riding side-saddle and puffing at pipes, their sandals flopping loosely at every jolt. Women without donkeys, staggering under ponderous loads, balancing atop their heads great baskets of fruit or produce. Donkeys without women, long strings of them tied together, plodding along with the patient air peculiar to burros, laden with bulging panniers of charcoal, or almost buried beneath their hay-stacks of bright green sugar cane.

Now or then, of course, some upper-class Haitian elbowed his superior way among the peasants, his complexion a shade or two lighter, perhaps, his dress contrastingly immaculate, his French the French of Paris. But in general the crowd was undilutedly African, its color the deepest black, its speech an unintelligible *creole* akin to that of the French Antilles, which robbed the tongue of Dumas of every grammatical nicety, chipped off stray syllables at will, and introduced strange phrases of its own.

One might comb the farthest corner of the Caribbean, indeed, without discovering a more fascinating human panorama than this which awaited the most casual tourist in Port-au-Prince.

Ragged old beggars, seated against the house-walls, held out empty gourds as a stranger passed, whining their complaints. Conspicuous in the noisy, eddying crowds were the "Gas girls," the venders of kerosene. They

strode the streets with a masculine, flat-footed stride, bearing upon their turbaned pates huge Standard Oil tins, and advertising their product with a deep-lunged and prolonged wail:

“Gaz-z-z-z-z-z-z!”

It came out on one long note, with just the faintest rising inflection at the end.

Now or then some younger maiden had pulled back the yoke of her dress to reveal a smooth black shoulder—a bit of coquetry, it would seem, since only those with rounded and satiny shoulders appeared to practice the custom—and when flattered by a passing gentleman’s attention, she would go fairly swimming along the street, swinging appreciative arms and hips, and grinning back her delight.

On one corner, an aged and withered hag, suffering apparently from some vague grievance at Fate in general, told the world of her troubles, in that way of all old ladies throughout the West Indian islands, chatting loudly into space while a knot of interested listeners gathered closely about her. Others lined the curb, doffing their hats as a funeral procession passed. It consisted of two hearses—why two, one wondered?—and behind them marched some four hundred close-packed mourners on foot. And in the rear, one single carriage, containing one more mourner, quite evidently the widow, a buxom wench in her Sunday best, who sat proudly erect, radiating the utmost satisfaction at her momentary importance.

Now or then, too, there passed an American marine, or a naval officer in his tropical whites, but they were mere atoms in the mass of donkeys and darkies, and darkies and donkeys, which surged through Port-au-Prince. It was a throng less colorful in garb than that of Guadeloupe, less frantically active than that of Barbados, yet reminiscent of them both, and with a further personality of its own.

IV

It was mainly in the streets about the waterfront that one found the business section, and even here one noted the contrast of old and new.

On the Rue Republicaine a line of high-powered public automobiles was paralleled by a similar line of aged hacks whose woebegone horses sagged wearily in the traces, while motorcycle sidecars bearing the label of the "U. S. M. C." contested the right of way with the omnipresent burro-trains.

This was considered the principal shopping center,¹ but the shops—save possibly those which carried the absolute necessities of life—were scarcely noteworthy. The tourist trade, just beginning here at the time of my visit, had as yet failed to awaken the vendor of curios, and my own search for photographs revealed only Parisian "art studies in the nude." Luxuries were conspicuously absent, for local American residents (most of whom were in the Naval Service) habitually bought their goods at home

or through the Naval commissary, and the Haitian aristocrats (deprived of their political jobs by the Occupation) had little money to squander.

The natives in general, even if blessed with wealth, would undoubtedly have preferred to trade in one of their own familiar markets. There were several such in Port-au-Prince, easily discovered by the bedlam which emanated therefrom. The principal ones, occupying adjacent squares not far from the waterfront, were covered with huge iron roofs, and connected by a lurid old red and green arch whose four barbaric towers were optimistically dedicated to "Union," "Progres," "Paix," and "Travail." The entrance steps had been worn away by generations of bare black feet until they presented but a single sloping surface. The mob within seemed much more interested in "Travail" than in "Paix" or "Union." Huge baskets littered the aisles until there was scarcely room to pass, and although the floor space covered two blocks, the marketers overflowed into a half dozen adjacent streets.

Here, on curb or gutter, the merchants laid out their wares. Candy makers opened shop with a tin of boiling molasses and a handful of peanuts. Tobacconists offered crude cigars, with matches tied by a strip of grass in bundles of six for those who preferred to buy at retail. Nothing whatsoever was allowed to go to waste, and prominently displayed among the offerings were many empty bottles, gathered no doubt from some white man's

yard—bottles of every conceivable size and shape, with many a thirst-provoking label.

In former years, also, these petty tradesmen had been accustomed to congregate in the spacious open park before the local cathedral, and the favorite picture among American magazine editors today is that of the multitudinous throng milling through this cathedral plaza. Unfortunately, however, the racket of the marketers was long an annoyance to the priests, who claimed that they could not hear their own masses; today the natives have been banished to other squares on the outskirts of the town, and the famous plaza is now a barren, pebbly desert, surrounded by the most woebegone shacks of Port-au-Prince—rickety, flimsy, unpainted dwellings which make the spot an eye-sore.

In contrast, the new cathedral stood out in more impressive grandeur. A truly handsome structure, of the dazzling white typical of all new Haitian buildings, it rose from a lofty stone terrace, and towered high above the ugly hovels. Its interior, however, was very simple and in excellent taste, without the bric-à-brac gaudiness characteristic of so many Latin cathedrals.

It was too elegant to please the rustic Haitians. They might gather about the little shrine outside, the old mam-mies praying with a rapt expression of ecstasy, while their tiny babies, scarcely able to walk, knelt behind them, looking puzzled and perplexed but mimicking every gesture. They seldom went inside, however, as did the

more sophisticated aristocrats. The peasants still preferred the old cathedral which stood beside it—a squatty, crumbling, hideous ruin, yet with many a familiar image or saint who had blessed their great grandfathers.

v

It was slow to change—this ancient Republic of Haiti. The new still seemed too glaringly new, like a stiff garment that had yet to shape itself to an unaccustomed body.

But a few blocks above the cathedrals, on the higher slopes overlooking the town, modernity was creeping in. Here one found the Champ de Mars, perhaps the most historic spot in Port-au-Prince, transformed into a very formal park of lawns and curving cement driveways, with an avenue named for Lindbergh.

Its palms were still too young for shade, and its grass a trifle parched by the sun. But about it were many new buildings which might easily be ranked among the finest in the West Indies—the quarters of the American engineers responsible for the transformation; a Palais de Justice still in course of construction; and a Presidential Palace which, for size and glaring showiness, surpassed the White House at Washington.

All that remained here of the older Haiti was a statue of Dessalines, the leader in the warfare which expelled the early French, and in his time the most bitter of Haitians in his hatred for the whites. It was he who tore the French flag apart. To the Haitians, the tri-color stood

for black man, white man, and mulatto. Old Dessalines, in the moment of African victory, ripped out the white from the banner and pieced together the red and blue which still serves Haiti today. And he it was who gave the order, "Slay all whites in the country." Rumor has it that Haiti purchased his monument at a bargain, when it was rejected by some South American country, for whose national hero the sculptor had intended it. Certainly it lacks the African features which must have graced the physiognomy of the actual Haitian liberator. But the inscription proclaimed this the "Illustre Jean Jacques Dessalines," and even in Simon Bolívar's cocked hat he made a heroic figure as he waved a savagely defiant sword in the general direction of the Palace and the barracks of the American marines.

In his way, he seemed to symbolize the Haiti of former years, which had so gloried in its freedom from foreign domination. His back was turned resolutely upon Hospital Hill, where Marine Corps officers now dwelt in the flower-shrowded *chateaux* which once had housed the local politicians and statesmen. Or perhaps he was merely expressing contempt for the two peppy, up-to-date cafes which cultivated American patronage by advertising: "Ice Cream, Sandwiches, Beer on Draught," or "Try our Lindbergh Cocktail!"

VI

I heeded the injunction, and stopped to pay homage to the aviator.

It was a pleasant place, this Champ de Mars, when the sun had lost its mid-day fire. Gradually the veranda tables of the little cafes filled up with blond German exporters, quaffing their beer and discussing the price of coffee; with dignified Haitians of the white-collared class, who sipped their wine in leisurely French fashion, chatting of art or politics; with youthful American marines, who called for rum, and talked of many things.

I caught snatches of their conversation:

"Sure, the bandmaster got fired."

"Why?"

"Well, his band only knew three tunes. When the president came in, they played 'See the Conquering Hero Comes.' Then, at the right place, they did the national anthem. But they needed one more, something snappy when the president made his exit."

"What was it?"

"That's the trouble. That's why he got fired. The only other tune they knew was, 'Bye, bye, Blackbird.' "

Down below, on the grassy parade ground a regiment of *gendarmes* made its appearance—the native constabulary organized and officered by the Marine Corps—to run through a review with such precision that, were it not for the ebony faces, one might mistake them for the marines themselves.

Across the harbor, seen far off beyond the roofs of the city, a sunset traced its glowing reflection. The glare of auto head-lights cleft the dusk, and carriage bells tinkled. The local trolley, a bug-like contraption with a



Photos by Witte, Port-au-Prince

“A presidential palace which for size and showiness surpassed the White House at Washington”



The old and new cathedrals, and the market which the priests have banished because of its noise

motor up front, came swaying drunkenly up from town. On the edge of the green a portable merry-go-round commenced operation, its gay but raucous music striking a dissonant note. Upon it Haitian peasants were riding with childish glee, many of the grown-ups sitting backward on their horses and grinning broadly in appreciation of their own comicality, while some twenty or thirty local policemen in full accoutrements took advantage of their authority to rush upon the whirling stage and commandeer a free ride.

I watched the purple night rise up again from the sea, blotting out the president's palace and with it the Illustre Jean Jacques Dessalines, creeping higher among the cañons of the surrounding hills, until the mountains again stood black against the sky. And once more those fires appeared among the distant, seemingly peopleless valleys. Not voodoo fires, I knew now. Yet one had a feeling that much of the old Haiti still remained out there as it did in Port-au-Prince. And I would be here several months. . . . I rang for another Lindbergh.

CHAPTER XI

DOWN TO AUX CAYES

I

ACCORDING to an old guidebook in my possession, Haiti was completely lacking in thoroughfares.

The hardy traveller who ventured beyond the capital, said this volume, must prepare to wade through muck-holes, wherein both men and beasts sank to their shoulders and sometimes were unable to extricate themselves.

I was consequently expecting to rough it when I set out in search of the one-time class-mate I had come to visit, for he was somewhere on the distant south coast. But when I stopped at the office of Public Works, to inquire about routes and guides, an official in the uniform of a U. S. naval commander grinned at me.

"Why, yes," he said, "Al's down at Aux Cayes. But just wait a minute." He turned to his phone, one of these up-to-date self-service phones, and gave the dial a spin. "Hello. Alexis? Your friend has arrived. What's that? All right." He hung up. "He says he'll send his car for you. It will be here tomorrow at noon."

And the following day I drove out across one of many new highways by which the American engineers are now connecting all the principal cities of the country—toward

the town of Aux Cayes, the leading port of the south coast, and the third city of the republic.

II

It was several years since this particular thoroughfare had been opened to motor-traffic, yet rustic Haiti was still unprepared for the occasional auto which crossed it.

Our roar and screech suggested no peril to the dogs, pigs, or chickens which chose it for their daily *siesta*. Our onrush consequently created havoc, and my chauffeur, an English-speaking Jamaican, apologized to me as he ran over the fifth goat.

"Sorry, sir, but you'll just have to get used to these bumps. We wouldn't get anywhere in Haiti if I stopped for anything smaller than a bull."

It sounded a trifle heartless, at first. But one soon lost sympathy here for dumb animals. They were altogether *too* dumb. And the humans, in some cases, were little more alert than the livestock.

One slow-witted fellow walked deliberately toward us with his eyes wide open. He saw us plainly enough, but his senses were not sufficiently trained by experience to recognize our approach as potential calamity—until we almost struck him. Then, galvanized into the most astonishing activity, he leaped wildly forward, backward, sideward, and skyward—all in one convulsive movement, it seemed—his performance exactly that of a rooster, and perfect even to the squawk.

Others, keener perhaps in intellect, gave us the widest

possible berth. Women pulled frantically at burros, which, burro-like, immediately interpreted this as a challenge to a tug-of-war. Where two persons drove the same animal, as often happened, they generally yanked in opposite directions. When this proved unsuccessful, they both put their shoulders to the flanks of the little beast, from opposite sides, and pushed, with the same negative result. Sooner or later they usually abandoned the creature to its supposed fate, and fled across the roadside ditch and far up the adjacent embankments, as though expecting us to turn aside and pursue them.

"But they're not so comical here, sir, as they are in some parts," volunteered my driver. "Las' year Mister Alexis and I took the firs' automobile over a new road to Port Salut where they'd *never* seen one before. Yes, sir, all the mayors give us greeting-letters to take to the next mayor, like we was Mr. Hoover or somebody. And all the people, they come runnin' after us, mile after mile, jus' to see what made the machine go. 'Lord,' they says, 'here's a bull-cart what don't use any bulls.' "

III

The road led for a time along the seacoast, then cut inland.

Even in its shape, this Haiti was extremely peculiar, and it has often been likened to the figure of a huge turtle swimming westward. The island—of which, incidentally, the Haitian Republic occupies only about one-third, with the Dominican Republic tenanting the rest—has two

great western peninsulas which closely resemble the flappers of a tortoise, while a goodly sized isle between them (that of Gonave) supplies the likeness of a head.

This is the second largest of the West Indies, ranking next to Cuba. Its name, in the aboriginal dialect, once meant "highland." And of Haiti, as of many another West Indian island, it is told that Columbus, in his effort to describe to Queen Isabella the striking irregularity of its contours, crumpled in his hand a piece of parchment and said:

"It looks about like that."

If one were to believe *all* the chroniclers, it would appear that every early explorer, at some time in his career, pulled the same line on some other European monarch, for the tale has been used to illustrate the topography of a dozen various islands. Yet, overworked as the device might be, one could believe it of Haiti.

But it has other peculiarities. Its mountains, averaging four thousand feet in height, but often rising to greater altitudes, give it a variety of climate, and with the propensity which mountains have for stealing the rain, they make it a land of luxuriant valleys interspersed with stretches of the most barren desert.

At times, as we sped along the southern peninsula, we traversed great Saharas of sand relieved only by an Arizona-like cactus.

"Nobody wash here," remarked my Jamaican driver.

It was not surprising news when one considered that people in such regions often carried their drinking water

from a spring over ten miles distant. The really surprising discovery was that these unattractive lands were inhabited. Haiti, with a population of about two million packed into its area of ten thousand square miles, was the most crowded territory in the West Indies except for Barbados. From time to time, in the most desolate portions of it, we met a stream of native marketers, heralding the approach to another village of mud and thatch, surrounded by a cactus hedge. And when we stopped to eat our picnic lunch, in what seemed a total wilderness, a host of black urchins made their appearance, hovering about us in hope of a hand-out.

They dressed with charming simplicity. Those of less than eight years wore nothing at all. Boys of from eight to twelve usually wore only a shirt, a shirt all too brief to make up for the lack of trousers. The girls were somewhat more modest, yet even *they* clad themselves in make-shift garb of home manufacture, and it was not uncommon in this poverty-stricken country to meet young ladies arrayed in costumes lettered with the trade-mark of a well-known American cement.

But there was much variety in the scenery along the way. Rolling hills. Occasional rich cane-lands, and patches of tropic jungle. Then glimpses of the sea again as we came out upon the southern coast and the familiar Caribbean. Streaks of amethyst and emerald about the reefs, then an azure that deepened toward the horizon.

There were still many stretches of desert here, but the country became wetter as we continued. In occasional



Photo by Witte, Port-au-Prince

"They dressed with charming simplicity"

hollows were soggy rice-fields, their clumps of mucky vegetation peopled with cranes and wild fowl. And where pools or lagoons permitted, one found that the Haitians were very much addicted to bathing. We passed groups of negroes enjoying the water, men and women swimming together with as little self-consciousness as in Japan. Everywhere the streams were lined with laundresses, stripped to the waist, with a frank display of strap-like breasts, their lower garments completely diaphanous. There *was* one party of youngsters whom we surprised at their bath, who clung together in excitement, shrieking in a mixture of amusement and dismay, but in general they were blandly unperturbed. Why not, when one grows to manhood in that abbreviated shirt?

Showers, promised since noon, fell intermittently as we continued. The valleys steamed beneath a cloud-gloom which presently enshrouded the world, and the thatch of house-roofs had a discolored, soaky-looking aspect from many previous rains. In this region, however, there was a neatness about the homes which one seldom noted elsewhere in Haiti. They were built of cane, and plastered with mud, but the mud had been white-washed; the trimmings were painted in red; and there were gardens of croton about the dwellings which testified to a civic pride on the part of the dwellers.

The negroes one met here were the best in Haiti. In the south they had been far less quick to join in the early uprisings than those of the north, and in later days had proved less prone to revolution. Many of them from

this part of the republic now went to Cuba in the cane-cutting season, lured by higher wages there, and came back with new ideas on home-improvement. Yet even in this best part of the country, Haiti was picturesque.

There were the graveyards along the way. The stones—or more accurately, the mounds of plastered brick—were all coated with the prevailing whitewash, and surmounted by tiny crosses. One marvelled at the frequency with which they appeared—a frequency which made them, next possibly to the omnipresent cavalcades of donkeys, the most familiar sight in the Black Republic.

The graves were packed so closely together that one wondered how all the bodies were buried, unless the deceased was occasionally planted in an upright posture. From a slight distance, the groups of tombs resembled pigmy villages, or miniature reproductions of Manhattan Island planted in the forest. And when nightfall caught us still on the road, that procession of white cemeteries took on a distinctly ghostly appearance.

Whenever the rain ceased, tiny candles gleamed among the headstones, where devoted natives had placed them, and at an occasional wayside shrine one saw offerings of food or even a small bottle of rum.

“For the devils,” explained my chauffeur, contemptuously. Like all British darkies, he looked down on those of other lands. “These Haitians, they all go Catholic Church, but they take no chances, sir.”

They quite evidently did make their own reservations in accepting Christianity. On several of the wayside

crosses, the figure of Christ was painted black, or at least a rich chocolate brown. And to the simple country folk, the universe was still infested with spirits—African spirits and mostly evil ones—which they did their best to placate.

I did not blame them a bit. A peculiar mystery seemed always to settle over the mountains here at nightfall. One felt it as strongly on the third night as on the first, and it never diminished. The natives now traversing the gravelined road were usually in small groups, never alone; they loomed up suddenly like spectres as our headlights picked them from the darkness and the rain.

But this was still a material world. The shouts of the natives were exceedingly human as our wheels, racing through the wet ruts, sent showers of spray to either side, soaking whomever we passed. And eventually, as the lamps of a comparatively large city sparkled before us, we turned into a gateway through a neat picket fence, to drive up to a pleasant little bungalow, completely American in its furnishings, where friends awaited.

Lieutenant Alexis, whom I'd come to visit, was district engineer at Cayes, and married to a charming Virginia girl. The rest of the local American colony dropped in after dinner—two doctors and their wives, and a couple of *gendarmerie* officers—a small but pleasant and sociable group. There was mail on the table, the first in months. And after my long wanderings through the Caribbees, it was very much of a homecoming.

IV

So began a several weeks' sojourn of the south coast.

When the Americans first came down here, they had led a rather lonesome and strenuous life. Solitary officers hung their hammocks in whatever shack might offer accommodation, and lived on native fare.

Today, by the exercise of ingenuity, usually the ingenuity of their wives, they managed to make themselves quite comfortable, in pleasant little cottages. It was said to be rather a sore point to many upper-class Haitians that these white invaders generally obtained the best houses in town. The natives who owned such houses, however, were always eager to rent them to the Americans, who invariably kept them in repair, screened the verandas, and added garages and bath-rooms at their own expense. And thanks largely to the coats of paint with which our colony had brightened the old "mansions" and the gardens which they had planted about them, the street upon which we dwelt—a broad, sandy, palm-lined suburban avenue—was locally known as "Millionaires' Row."

Servants, too, were readily obtainable and reasonable in price, and the average officer employed from six to eight of them, all specialists in their line—a butler, a serving maid, a room maid, a cook, a laundress, a yard-boy, and perhaps a few assistants to the aforementioned.

"The whole gang," one frequently heard it remarked, "doesn't accomplish half as much as good old Bridget did at home."

But nevertheless they were always eager to please, though often in need of training. The little girl who waited upon the table might be a trifle puzzled. In every household she would set out the utensils meticulously at exact spaces—just as had the Misses Coralline, Honorine, and Azaline at Basse Terre—as though performing some inexplicable but necessary rite. Perhaps she sometimes felt that Madame's insistence upon having the jardinier in the center was one of her own foreign devices for scaring away some American species of evil spirit. And as she served us—you will note the same thing in every foreign colony throughout the globe—she kept an eye on Madame American for that clandestine little shake of the head which means, "No; serve the lady first."

Yet this little miss always had her pride of station. Ask her to make a bed or scrub a floor, and she would be most indignant. That was a task for the house-maid! It was far beneath *her* dignity!

Only old Maman, the dean of our establishment, doubled in more than one role. Officially she was the laundress, but from her few monthly dollars—a comparative fortune in Cayes—she contrived to hire a corps of three assistants to do her heavy work, which left her free to preside generally (and with great personal satisfaction) over the whole establishment. She was really a very faithful old girl, however. She took a certain pride in lighting the lamps at the exact hour of dusk, and afterwards she would sit patiently on the back porch, sometimes until quite late at night, waiting to perform her

one other outstanding duty—to lock and bolt the doors after our last rubber of bridge.

This was really a very important duty, for Haiti is infested with sneak-thieves. Nearly all West Indians are born pilferers—my own small possessions, such as fountain pen, handkerchiefs, and even a toothbrush, had disappeared with astonishing regularity at every stop I made in the Lesser Antilles—but the Haitians have a particularly bad reputation in this respect. Here every housewife was obliged not only to take frequent inventory of her goods, but even to lock up the choicer edibles in a screened larder called a *guarder-manger* (“guard-the-food”) against the depredations of her own servants.

It kept a housewife fairly busy here, doling out the ingredients for a next meal, teaching cook to prepare dishes strange to the Haitian menu, instructing her patiently that for a party of six guests instead of three, the quantities in the recipe must be doubled. Such mathematics were beyond the powers of a Haitian cook. But in one matter she was always a priceless jewel—the matter of marketing and bargaining.

It was comparatively seldom that the queen of one's kitchen here attempted to make a “squeeze”—to steal a few cents for herself as Orientals so invariably do. Hers was a very great pride in her own shrewdness; she obtained every article at the lowest possible price; and she could not bear to have Madame think her a poor bargainer, even though she might enrich herself.

Our own particular cook regarded her jaunt to market

as the high-spot in her day. She was a large and robust creature, and held a high sense of her importance. She deigned to take with her only a small candy-box, a tin thing whose elaborate ornamentations made it fit for a lady to carry, and in this she would bring back a few of the choicer, more expensive purchases. So plebeian a thing as a head of cabbage, however, was far beneath her station; for the transportation of this she would always hire some native girl of lesser rank; and on the days when she was preparing for a real dinner party, it was an impressive sight to see her marching home with her grand air at the head of a small procession.

When it came to driving her much-loved bargains, however, the humblest market woman could not outdo her in shrill, machine-gun chatter, or in endurance. I recall, for instance one altercation with a pedler which lasted an entire day. The old lady had stopped at our doorstep to ask whether we cared to buy some eggs.

"No," said cook. "We never use eggs. How much are you asking?"

"Dix cob."

That was ten cents Haitian, or two cents American, and cook was outraged. It even roused her to profanity. Name of a name! Did the vender think her crazy? At the end of the first hour's discussion, the old market-woman withdrew, but she had evidently sensed the fact that cook did need eggs, and from time to time she would reappear, offering some small reduction in price. It was along toward nightfall that they reached an agreement.

Two for eleven centimes?

"I'll take a dozen," said cook.

"But," protested the other lady, "I only have two eggs."

v

Of all the darkies in Haiti, the most entertaining were these market-people.

To them the excitement and chatter of the mart was an obsession. Many of those who passed our house would refuse to sell all their wares en route—just as the Indians of Mexico and South America sometimes do—lest they have nothing to argue over when they reached their regular vending-place.

The older women were often talking furiously to themselves on their way to town, and I liked to listen to them. Their *creole* was still a puzzle to me—for the local dialect changed even such simple words as "vous" to "ou," and ignored all inflections, and used the verbs interchangeably as nouns or vice versa—but there was no mistaking the fact that they were rehearsing the daily program:

"No, I can not afford to sell my bananas at seventy. Well, perhaps for eighty? Seventy-five?" Their black faces just glowed with the ecstasy of victories that awaited them ahead. "Then *take* them at seventy."

One seldom saw many men in this procession. It is said that in the old days of independence and insurrection, the male civilians preferred to hide at home or in

the fields, and dared not come into the towns lest they be summarily drafted into the army of some local general. The fate that might befall the wife at the hands of revolutionists was sure to be much more brief—and perhaps much less painful than is generally assumed in polite society—and she it was who daily brought the family produce into town. The necessity for this precaution had long ago ceased, but the women here were quite as strong as their menfolk; they saw no great hardship in travelling many miles with baskets on their heads; and they found a great joy in the play of wits which accompanied every sale.

In every Haitian village, no matter how small, the market was the hub of daily life. It seldom boasted of a shed, like the ones of Port-au-Prince, but the tropic sun held little terror for these blacks. They hung up shelters of matting, like the sails of Oriental sampans, and in the skimpy shade which these afforded, they set out their palm-leaf brooms, their home-made straw hats, their earthenware jars, their displays of fruits and vegetables.

A new law, promulgated by American doctors, required that paper must be kept over the stickier wares to protect them against flies. But no law could protect the goods against the dozens of hands which examined every mango in the box before choosing the largest. And no law—even had the authorities been so injudicious as to institute anti-noise regulations—could have quelled the babble of the controversies.

"If nine tenths of these people would stay at home and produce something," said more than one foreign resident, "the country would be much better off."

Which undoubtedly was true.

Behind the little city of Cayes lay one of the most fertile plains in the republic—some 150,000 acres of rich, alluvial soil—but it consisted mostly of palm forest. A comparatively small portion of it had been planted with sugar cane. Why bother? Bananas and cotton and coffee grew wild among the hills, where the early French colonists had first sown the seed. The natives merely took therefrom what Nature chose to give them, and brought it in to town, to haggle for hours over the few centimes it might be worth.

Barefoot, poverty-stricken peasants! There's an old tale that still runs the rounds in Haiti, of a day when Port-au-Prince, the capital, decided to be more punctilious. It decreed that no one might enter without shoes. Policemen stopped the unshod at the city gate. But the new scheme failed to work. Port-au-Prince suddenly found itself starving for the produce which the shoe-less peasants brought in from the hills. And when the capital grew real hungry, it quit its sartorial splurge.

This Haiti was a poor, poor country!

Along the road, on a market day, would sit the cotton buyers—buxom girls, usually much better dressed than the peasants, and apparently with more imagination and initiative—each with a set of scales upon a tripod before her. The other people would pause to weigh out and sell



"I never lost interest in the natives who streamed past the bungalow veranda"



Photos by Witte, Port-au-Prince

"There was a comicality in the endless procession of darkies and donkeys"

a half dozen pods from some bush in their back yard, and pass on, gleeful over the small proceeds.

Coffee alone came into town in any bulk, and formed practically the republic's sole article of export. It was the world's best coffee, according to the local buyers—they were mostly Germans—and it was in great demand in Europe, where, because of its strong smoky flavor, it was used to strengthen the Central American and Brazilian coffees.

"If only the natives would grow it intelligently!" lamented one of the Teutons in Cayes. "They could raise four times as much, at six cents a pound and sell it for twenty-three. But they are always trying to get it for nothing a pound, from the forest. You will see it growing in thick jungles in the hills, so thick that no bush produces much. If they would cut down every other bush, they would have a crop much greater. But no! They spend all their time gathering stones. Come and see."

He led the way into his warehouse, where some forty girls sat upon the floor, sorting out the beans. Beside each sorter was one pile of coffee, and another of tiny pebbles of about the same size and shape as the berries.

"You see? We pay less for every bag they bring, because we know it will be half stones. These Haitians are not lazy. Just think how hard they work to find so many stones that *look* like coffee!"

Indeed, they were *not* lazy. Here, as in crowded Barbados, they had developed a high quality of industry. But to a race which loved conversation so dearly, there

was little attraction in tilling a verbally unresponsive field, and they much preferred the excitement of the market.

The several villages on this south coast had apparently arranged their market-day schedules to avoid conflict—Thursday in Aquin, Friday in St. Louis, Saturday in Cayes—and many of the old women hereabouts attended them all, hiking some twenty miles each night in order to reach the next place. There was one wizened old crone in particular who came to my notice, who apparently *never* slept, but spent all her time on the road, always with a basket of bananas upon her head.

Her system puzzled me, for on one day she would sell her load in one place; then she would immediately negotiate the purchase of another basket at approximately the same price she had received, and go marching away to sell it, again at the same price, at some other town.

Profit?

Of course, she explained, she did not make much. Apparently the thought of doing so did not trouble her. She kept herself alive by occasionally eating one of the bananas. And she had the fun of buying and selling.

What more could a native want?

CHAPTER XII

THE ECHO OF VODOO DRUMS

I

DURING the several weeks I spent in Cayes, I never lost interest in the natives who streamed past the bungalow veranda. There was no distinct type in Haiti. One saw here tall, gawky negroes and short, fat ones—or as many others as one might see in a tour of Africa itself, where races run all the way from the gigantic to the dwarfish—and they enjoyed in common only one infallible trait. They were certain to prove entertaining.

There was a comicality in the unfailing procession, which does not easily communicate itself to paper. One had to see for himself the great, buxom wenches who went riding past on donkeys so much smaller than themselves. At times a mountain of baggage intervened between the beast and its rider. At other times the old lady sat far back on the animal's rump—"back seat drivers" we usually called such—and one watched expectantly for her to slide off at any moment over the tail. Girls of slimmer figure often rode two on a burro, and not infrequently one saw three atop the same patient mount.

"I've a scheme that would be worth a fortune down here," one American confided jovially. "It's to cross

one of these donkeys with a daschund, and develop something long enough to carry a whole family."

II

In general, the Haitians were a less lively, merry folk than those of the French Antilles.

They seemed far more intent upon their business. Perhaps, as some commentators have suggested, they had a certain seriousness in their outlook upon life which came from the many past years of revolution when life was often neither safe nor happy.

Yet they were quick to answer a smile. And there were times when their mood was responsive even to the weather. I recall one visit I made to the local coffee warehouse on a rather gloomy day, when all the girls who sat sorting the berries appeared shrouded in a sombre gloom of their own.

"No like the rain," said the German overseer. "Maybe sun come out, you hear them sing."

The sun did come out, and immediately they sang, humming a chant as they worked; it swelled in volume as the day grew brighter, like the chorus of so many birds.

It was a keen delight to these humbler peasants to attract the interested attention of a white man, provided they had come into contact with white men before. The employees of the American engineer quite loved to pose for their pictures. Natives whom I halted upon the road

with my kodak would stand at attention until I indicated that they were at liberty to pass on.

But not always. Some, caught as they emerged from the jungle-trails and the cane-brakes, would merely quicken their pace, scurrying away with many a resentful back-glance over their shoulders. Others, caught upon the highroad, would prod their donkeys into increased speed, whipping the little beasts unmercifully over the face and ears, undoubtedly the only sensitive spots remaining upon an animal calloused from many past beatings. And there were a few ladies—queer characters mostly—who seemed to realize that I wanted them as curiosities, and resolutely refused.

Old Susie was one of these. She lived in an abandoned garbage incinerator out behind the cemetery. Tradition had it that she once had been a *maman-loi*, or priestess of the ancient voodoo cult, and the gaunt old creature certainly looked the part. Today, however, she was without prestige, and lived most humbly in the ruined kiln, sleeping upon a bed of straw, eating whatever refuse she could pick up from the scrap-heaps of others. I greatly wanted *her* photo—"the last of the witches"—but she saw me coming, and crouched far back in the shadows of her primitive abode, chattering vehemently. No monetary reward could induce her into the sunlight, nor even the blandishment of interpreters who assured her that the picture, entered in a beauty contest, might gain her an offer from Hollywood. She bided her time, and the mo-

ment our backs were turned, darted out through some hole in her wall, to go scurrying away across the hills like an animated scarecrow, her ragged dress flapping about a long pair of pipe-stem legs.

"She's supposed to be mad," one of my friends explained. "You meet a great many here who are. It's probably hereditary syphilis which accounts for most of them."

There was another old woman in the neighborhood who enjoyed the reputation of having once been a *maman-loi*, and who developed a real fondness for being photographed. She evidently worked now in some local gang of cane-cutters, as did many others of her sex, and we always met her upon the road with a huge cane-knife. The first time I snapped her, she apparently felt that action was required, for she danced before the camera, waving her sword, also singing at the top of her lungs. My laughter at her performance so pleased her that she continued it for considerable time, with growing enthusiasm. And thereafter, whenever I encountered her, she was certain to stop me. She would point at the kodak to indicate that I was expected to snap her again. And then she would dance, and dance, and dance, as long as I aimed it at her!

III

On a Sunday there were cockfights.

Six days the Haitians might labor—or argue in the

market—but on the seventh day they gave themselves up whole-heartedly to pleasure.

Some visitors maintain that even the roosters know when the sabbath arrives, and crow more belligerently. But be that fact as it may, this was always a big occasion for the owners of such birds, and the procession of natives which then passed our house was largely of men, each with a rooster under his arm, headed toward one of the many rings on the outskirts of the city, from which throughout the day would emanate such shouts as resound from an American ball park when Babe Ruth hits another home run.

One Sunday, with my hosts at Cayes, I drove out to the principal battle-ground to witness the national sport.

The inclosure was a large one, containing three pits, about each of which milled a noisy throng. Men paraded about with their fighting-birds, some scrawny and scarred from previous combats, some still full-feathered and gorgeous. Other cocks, tied to trees or fence-posts, glared at one another, preened themselves, tugged at their tethers, and voiced angry challenges.

At one corner of the enclosure a three-card monte man held forth, with a sort of side-show of his own; at another, an exponent of the shell game; and wherever room permitted, some saleswoman had set up a little stand laden with tobacco and *tafia*, the raw native rum. These few entertainers or venders seemed the only calm and sober persons present; the rest, whether they had par-

taken of the *tafia* or not, were intoxicated at least with excitement, and gave one the impression that something momentous and thrilling would very shortly happen.

As often in Haiti, however, there was far more talk than action. For half an hour or more the chicken-fanciers merely screamed at one another, the beads of perspiration standing out upon countless black faces as they argued over prospective matches which always failed to materialize. Finally they *appeared* to have come to a decision, and there was a trampling rush for places of vantage at one of the pits.

A negro—he had traveled evidently, and wished to display his few words of English—made room for our party. “*Owi*, zey fight! Yes, zey fight! Zey fight to ze death!”

Still, no one fought except the spectators, whose combat was purely verbal. Any group of Americans so obviously worked up over an argument, one felt, would unquestionably have come to blows. These Haitians, however, although furiously in earnest, were really enjoying it. One suspected that many of them brought their roosters here exactly as their wives carried produce to market—for the pleasure of bargaining rather than for any material result—and it was quite apparent that no owner cared to pit his cock against any which it did not promise to whip with ease and certainty.

“*C'est impossible!*” murmured our negro friend. “Eet ees impossible to make zee feefty-pound bird fight wiz zee bird what weigh one hundred pounds!”

One could forgive him a slight exaggeration in the weights of the prospective combatants. But we were also losing hope that anything would *ever* happen. From time to time there followed another stampede to one of the other rings, resulting only in another fruitless squabble. It was late in the afternoon before a bout actually was arranged. And then the excitement knew no limit!

The mob packed tightly about the largest pit. Some crude benches, three-tiers high, had been erected here, but they proved totally inadequate, and a goodly portion of the spectators, chattering like simians, swarmed into the branches of the mango trees above. Their babble was deafening. Money waved in a flutter of black hands. Even the few semi-aristocrats present—gentlemen in solemn black ties and unlaundered wing-collars—lost their composure, while a dozen or more *gendarmes*, far from preserving order, fought for places, like the rest.

There was some more delay, to be sure. Spurs must be sharpened. (The owners here did not use the steel gaffs common in most countries, but filed the birds' own natural weapons). One man took a mouthful of rum and spat it generously over his champion. And at last, with further difficulty, the ring was cleared for action.

We never saw the fight, however. For, the moment the roosters squared off and assumed their first hostile crouch, the spectators lost the little discipline they did possess. Mad with the thrill of it, they all leaped from the tiers of seats into the arena again, until they left no room for the battle. My only memory of a Haitian

cock-fight is of a closely-packed group of wooly black heads resembling a football huddle.

IV

Then there were the drums.

If you simply visit Port-au-Prince, as the average tourist does, you probably will not hear them. But down in Aux Cayes, theirs was a familiar chorus; one heard it nearly every night, and sometimes even by day.

It never came in measured beats, like the drumming of other lands. Instead, it issued from hill or palm forest in a continued roll, now deep, now high and shrill, and endlessly prolonged. The sound was barbaric and strangely weird, like the voice of the Congo itself.

A decade or so ago, perhaps, that voice might have indicated some strange voodoo rite—some bit of sorcery in the hills, with human sacrifice. Today the marines, or their native gendarmes, had about succeeded in suppressing such ceremonies. They had scoured the mountains to confiscate all priestly paraphernalia. The drums which had once proclaimed the bloody rituals—great giant drums reserved for the use of the prophets—were now destroyed or silent, and the little drums which one heard today were but a harmless echo of the dim, mysterious past.

Yet there was still something indefinably weird and savage about the tune. One could never guess at the distance or the direction from which it came. . . . Throb,

throb, throb! . . . Often I rode all over the countryside with the district engineer, trying to locate the source of that ceaseless roll, only to discover at length that it came from one of the cane-fields just behind our house.

Here the Haitian planters employed it for stimulating their workmen.

The orchestra usually consisted of three men. Their only instruments were the tom-toms, crude affairs of goatskin stretched tightly over a hollowed log. Each would be of different size, with a separate tone, and the performers, using all the fingers to produce a steady roar, could themselves vary the note by playing at times on the center of the goatskin, at other times nearer the edge. Sometimes a musician might use a stick in one hand; on rare occasions one might use instead of a drum a taut cord of sisal-fibre, which gave a deep note equivalent to that of a bass-viol when plucked; but the final effect was always much the same.

The variety of sounds they were able to extract seemed almost inexhaustible, and they never slackened their pace. Their rhythm might change, might be accented occasionally by thuds from the base of the hand, but the roll itself kept on for hours, until it nearly drove one mad.

Upon the native cane-cutters it had a pronounced effect. Enlivened by the primitive music—the *only* music which the peasants today possessed—they would accomplish their stint in half the time that was otherwise required, and in mid-afternoon would go dancing home,

cavorting behind their drummers, with a whole day's labor finished.

To such prosaic purposes were these African drums devoted. But drama still lingered in the chorus. . . . Throb! Throb! Throb! . . . Throb! Throb! Throb! Throb! Throb! Throb! . . . There were times when it came from nowhere at all, and filled the entire world.

v

At night it was particularly weird, that throbbing of the drums.

Then at dinner—one night at the doctor's, another at the captain's, another at the engineer's—talk turned naturally upon Voodoo.

Those old women, who were reputed to have been *maman-loi* in their time, had they really been witch-doctors?

Once we called in a native servant.

"N'sais pas!"

"We might consult some intelligent, educated Haitian," I once suggested.

The others were amused.

"He probably would know less. And even if he did know something of it, he probably would deny that voodoo priests ever existed in his very enlightened republic—at least, not since the earliest days."

But there had certainly been many *maman-loi* here when the Americans intervened, and with the *papa-loi*, or men-priests, they had been all-powerful in the repub-

lic. Descendants of Guinea-Coast prophets who came over among the earliest slaves, they had been possessed of many a mysterious secret. They could brew a variety of concoctions—sometimes from the poisonous casava-root, —sometimes from the manchineel tree, most deadly of all the tropical woods, whose tempting little apples will kill you within a few minutes if you be so rash as to eat them, and whose very sap will sear your flesh like acid—sometimes from the putrid bodies of dead animals, and even from human bodies, which they dug up out of the grave.

Seabrook, who apparently *did* penetrate the inner circles of voodooism, maintains that it is a genuine religion, and affirms that all this magic is merely of secondary and incidental importance. Yet I think it was largely this magic—this personal knowledge of secrets, inherited often from father or mother or adopter—which gave a native the rank of priest or priestess among his people. This was almost a god—this fellow who could brew from the jungle-produce a concoction which induced coma, insanity, slow-death, or quick death, and which often baffled the ablest of medical men from more civilized lands.

Such arts gave them great authority among the simple blacks in the days of independence, and even presidents—as previously remarked—often lived in fear of their political power, if not of their poisons. They affected many other arts and secrets as well, and in their mountain temples conducted the queer rites in worship of the Great Green Serpent, and similar voodoo deities.

The exact nature of these rites is open to much controversy.

"A lot of fellows wrote about them in the early days," said one local resident, "but they seldom knew as much as they pretended. Some of them even professed to have gotten into the woods disguised as natives, to witness the ceremonies. Down here we suspect that they were mostly liars. What they did, perhaps, was to bribe some negroes to put on a show, and the show was just a lot of hokus-pokus arranged for their personal benefit. Then they came back and used a bit of imagination.

"Another fact which obscures the whole matter is that many who wrote about voodoo got it mixed up with other religions. The slaves were brought here from a lot of places in Africa, and they probably had dozens of different rituals. The priests, too, probably made changes of their own, using any new stunt which might impress their credulous followers."

In general, it seemed, the rites which have been so vaguely grouped together as voodoo, usually did consist of "hokus-pokus" even in the earlier days. They were mostly orgies of rum and lust, in the course of which the priests might sacrifice a goat or a chicken and pour its blood over the fanatical devotees. It was probably more rarely than has often been assumed that the gods called for the "goat without horns" as a human sacrifice was known. And it was no doubt *very* rarely that the latter orgy was followed, if at all, by the cannibalism which has sometimes been charged to Haiti.

The final evidence suggests that there *has* been some cannibalism in Haiti, but not the sort of savage cannibalism prompted by a relish for human flesh. There has persisted here the familiar superstition, found in all primitive countries, that by eating the heart of an enemy, one acquires his strength and courage. Thus natives have eaten the heart of fallen marines; they have rubbed the brains of vanquished American soldiers upon their bayonets, that the blades may have keener and more intelligent penetration. But I doubt that they have ever eaten human flesh for the joy of eating.

No one in Haiti really knew. American officers, even those who had been in the country for many years, knew nothing definite or reliable. They merely argued:

"There were cannibal tribes in Africa," maintained one old-timer, "and the first negroes who came over were not changed much by the sea-voyage."

"That's true. But even the sacrifice was on the wane before the intervention started."

"The marines found bodies in the interior that looked part eaten."

"Certainly, but they didn't see them eaten. Dogs or other animals could have done that work."

Thus, at discussions both in Cayes and elsewhere, we invariably came back to our starting-point. And it was particularly when I inquired as to conditions today that actual knowledge proved scarce. It seemed usually agreed that a few queer performances still continued in the farther hills. A party of engineers on an exploring trip in

the mountains behind Cayes had recently come upon a parade of natives heading toward an isolated cemetery with a goat gayly decked in robes and ribbons.

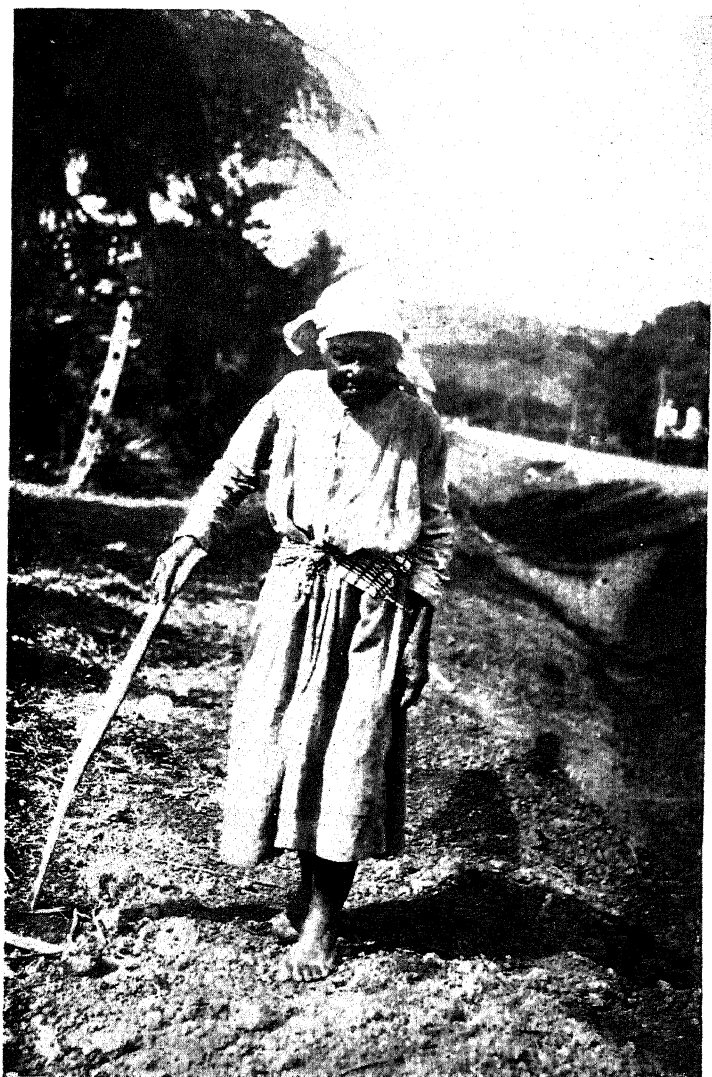
"But we saw nothing. They certainly were up to some funny business, only everything stopped when they caught sight of us. We even tried to bribe them at last to go on with it, and they wouldn't. 'No,' they said, 'this is not for the *blancs* [white men] to see.' "

That much was authentic.

"You can't question the fact that something goes on," was a general verdict. "Even up in Harlem, in our own New York City, negro doctors sell 'love potions' and other magic concoctions, and hold strange rites. And old customs don't die very readily in Haiti. They probably still slaughter a chicken occasionally. Maybe worse. The gendarmes are in sympathy with it. What goes on in those farther hills, we white men never know."

One only heard the drums. . . . Throb! Throb! Throb! . . . Throb! Throb! Throb! Throb! Throb! Throb! This time it probably indicated a native dance, or *bambache*, somewhere in the neighborhood. But the long-continued rhythm often got on one's nerves. . . . Throb! Throb! Throb! . . . The song of Africa!

In our living room at Cayes were several large drums which my host had collected on various surveying trips into the interior. When we could stand the native drumming no longer, we would turn on the victrola, seat ourselves before the several tom-toms, and make some jazz of our own.



“She was reputed to be a maman-loi, or priestess of the ancient voodoo cult”

VI

There was much of the primitive in these rural Haitians. Serious, almost solemn they might seem, when one met them at their daily chores, but they could rise to a high pitch of excitement at a cockfight. And to an even higher pitch at the *bambache*, or native dance.

In the old days this affair—and the cockfight, too—was held whenever the impulse prompted, and the Haitians, once started, had a tendency to continue indefinitely, to the neglect of more profitable pursuits. Today the local *gendarmerie* regulations forbade them except during week-ends, but when the week-end arrived, the peasants took full advantage.

Then, along toward sunset on a Saturday night the chorus of the drums would swell up in announcement of the festivities, like the hum of evening locusts.

Not from the Haitian club, to be sure, where the élite of Aux Cayes foregathered. *They* danced to the strains of an orchestra, or at least a phonograph, and they did it usually in full evening attire, confining themselves to waltz or fox-trot.

The drums came from the far outskirts of the town, and when one found the *bambache* which they advertised, it always repaid the visit. Whenever we heard them, some of us would pile into an automobile, and set out in search of the racket. It was never easy to locate.

"It seems to be down by the river."

"No, I'd say it's over in the woods."

That faculty, which even a single orchestra had, of echoing from everywhere and nowhere, was the more pronounced with a dozen of them in operation. But eventually, after racing here and there, we would come out upon some thatched shed in a clearing among the palms—a moon-bathed clearing, surrounded by tiny rum-stands with lamps that flickered and cast weird shadows. And in the center, beneath the leafy roof, men and women were stooping and posturing, engaged in a barbaric dance direct from the Congo itself.

As a rule they formed in parallel lines, the ladies in one, the gentlemen in the other, but with this ceased all resemblance to the Virginia Reel. It might vary at times, in minor details. Always, however, it was certain to be sensuous. The ranks bowed, and stamped their bare feet, and paused occasionally for breath, but no muscle ever rested long. Sooner or later the rows approached, every one riggling and squirming, until the bodies touched. Then the men would circle around their respective partners, as though with a sudden inspiration to put Satan behind them. But the lines would soon meet again in the center, to give a performance which failed to be suggestive merely because it left so little to the imagination.

And meanwhile continued the maddening roar of the drums, goading them into a frenzy. Next Monday, perhaps they would just be shabby workmen, laboring in the cane-field. Tonight they were back in Africa. And as the hours wore on, and *tafia* helped to inflame native pas-

sion, the American bosses usually decided it best to take their own wives back home.

"Not that there'd be any danger for white girls, in a place like Cayes, today. But you sometimes see some embarrassing things at these primitive *bambache*. There was one out here, some time ago, when they forgot it was only a dance."

VII

From every land I've visited I retain some sound which haunts the memory—from Japan, the clack of wooden clogs; from Mexico, the all-night piping of a policeman's whistle; from Guadeloupe, the shriek of native laughter; from British Islands, the incessant appeal for alms; from Haiti, those Congo drums.

Throb! Throb! Throb!

They carried one back two hundred years to the heart of central Africa. Listening to their locust-like drone for hours upon hours, even a white man could feel their barbarism creeping into his soul.

"And just imagine a gang of blacks up there in the mountains," suggested one friend of mine, "beating those damned things all night! Is it any wonder that often in the past they reverted to downright savagery? Or is it very hard to believe that they still revert today?"

CHAPTER XIII

THE FRUITS OF OCCUPATION

I

IF the drums which lulled me to sleep at night were weird, the bugle that awakened me was more so.

It came from the *gendarmerie* barracks just next door, where three old-timers from the U. S. Marine Corps were converting a few score of Haitians into somewhat soldierly replicas of themselves.

The bugler, like his pals, was still pretty raw at the job, but conscientious and persevering. He always *began* his Reveille correctly. Cracking on the second bar of it and forgetting the tune, he would do his best by substituting a bit of Mess Call, Assembly, Boots and Saddles, Fire Call, Taps, or whatever else might occur to him at the moment. But he always got his garrison out of bed, which after all was the main purpose of his performance, and by the time I strolled onto my own veranda to stretch and yawn, they were marching furiously about their little parade ground with a great to-do from their lusty-lunged black non-coms.

It was hard, at times, to take these soldiers seriously; one rather had the feeling that they were merely a lot of boys just playing at being soldier. When I dropped in to chat with their officers, the sentry would stop me with a

crashing port-arms, but a pleasant greeting in English would disconcert him; his face would turn blank, his rifle relax; he never seemed certain that his authority extended over white men, and he invariably saluted.

The officers were always cordial and obliging. Lieutenant B., who held the rank of Sergeant in the Marine Corps but had been jumped to higher grade in the local service, would take me through the jail and assemble his prisoners for a photograph.

"Sure," he said, "they like to pose. And they like to come to jail. Plenty of food and not much to do. They miss their rum and their women, of course, but we give them everything else they'd find at home. And you might notice that we run a nice, clean hooze-gow here. It's one of the best lodging-places in Haiti."

Thereafter he would line up the troops, going systematically along their ranks to pull campaign hats down to the proper tilt, and straightening each rifle to the regulation forty-five-degree angle.

These Haitian soldiers *could* learn to drill, in time. It was on any special duty which required initiative and judgment that they might prove unreliable, and when given specific instructions they were quite apt to obey them to the letter rather than in spirit. There was, for instance, a case which came to my attention in another Haitian town, of a *gendarme* on duty at a pier, who looked on with amused interest while a party of negro stevedores unloading a boat and finding some packing-cases broken, openly filled their shirts with tins of salmon and

smoked herring. Again and again the frantic consignee appealed to the soldier to stop this blatant theft.

The *gendarme* became annoyed at these repeated demands.

"I can't cease my work to interfere with those men!" he protested indignantly. "I'm on duty here. I've received orders to march up and down this blankety-blanked dock, and I'm going to obey them!"

Yet in spite of all this, Haiti today is about as peaceful as any country in the world, and more so than most. In the outlying towns about Cayes, where garrisons of two hundred men were kept in pre-Occupation days, two native policemen were now sufficient to maintain order. Despite the prevalence of petty thievery, violence was practically unknown. The marines, aside from relieving the natives of firearms, had instilled into them a particularly wholesome respect for a white man. And to-day one could travel throughout the republic without the slightest fear for one's safety or security.

II

It was not surprising, after some thirteen years of Marine Corps occupation, that Haiti was tranquil.

What did surprise me was the discovery that the average Haitian showed no resentment at this invasion of his territory by foreign troops.

The rustic peasant, in fact, seemed not at all perturbed about the intervention. This chap—who hopped with chicken-like squawks from the path of an automo-



A Haitian gendarme



A rural constable

bile—undoubtedly gave very little serious thought to problems of state, abstract ethics, or international affairs.

In the days when Haiti enjoyed its independence he was a mere pawn in the hands of politicians. He appears, as a rule, to have been by nature a peaceable, easy-going chap, glad to shirk military service whenever possible. But bickering generals were constantly impressing him into their armies to fight one cause or another, until it was a most erudite man who knew for what he was fighting or even for whom. Independence? His share of it was a decidedly small one.

In those days Haiti, although nominally a republic, was little more than a military despotism. A president, himself usually a general, controlled through a host of lesser *generals d'arrondissement*, district chiefs omnipotent in authority. These fellows received, according to a reporter in 1913, a salary of \$30 a month, from which they were supposed to defray not only their own expenses but those of their army. That such positions were greatly coveted is sufficient testimony to the opportunities they afforded for graft and extortion. Their soldiers were seldom paid or fed, but received in *lieu* of wages the privilege to prey upon civilians. It was the poor peasant—the average Haitian—who finally paid the bill. And today, if he *did* any thinking about the American Occupation, it was mainly to wonder why the marines who patrolled his territory neglected to pillage his crops.

It was only in the cities that one saw evidence of re-

sentment. There, occasionally, as one passed the aristocrat of lighter color, one met with a hostile glare. This was the chap who had been educated abroad, usually in Paris. He liked to feel himself superior in culture to the best of Yankees. His was somewhat the attitude of the later Romans toward the barbarians who invaded that empire. He read regularly a Haitian newspaper which lost no opportunity to comment upon the sufferings of the downtrodden Republic under the brutal heel of the great Colossus of the North.

As to this chap and his complaints, more anon, in a later chapter. But we might pause briefly to review the salient facts which led up to the intervention:

No one, of course, pretends that Uncle Sam, in intervening in Haiti, was prompted solely by generous and philanthropic motives. He had always been interested in the Caribbean, commercially at least, and with the opening of the Panama Canal the West Indies assumed a new strategic importance. Haiti in particular was an island whose harbors—notably that of Mole St. Nicholas, on the tip of the northwestern peninsula, controlling the Windward Passage—might have provided European powers with naval bases much too close to the Canal for Uncle Sam's peace of mind. And conditions were such in the Black Republic that any government could easily have found excuse for stepping in.

In the period between 1900 and 1915 two Haitian presidents were overthrown and exiled; a third was blown up with the palace; a fourth was poisoned by his enemies;

a fifth was banished; a sixth was chased out and later shot. The seventh was Guillaume Sam, a picturesque character even among Haitian presidents. Faced with one of the current revolutions, he had the bad judgment to execute all the political prisoners in his jail, about 160 of them, including many of the country's foremost citizens.

This proved a *faux pas*. Instead of quelling the revolt, it so inflamed the populace that all Port-au-Prince rose up in its wrath and chased Mr. Sam through the main street. He took refuge in the French Legation. The angry mob, however, was not to be stopped by shields, flags, or door-plates. It surged through the diplomatically immune portals, and dragged Sam out, and carved him into small cubes. French and British diplomats were wiring home for protection. A French cruiser had already landed sailors at Cape Haitien, and another was steaming for Port-au-Prince. And Uncle Sam, jealous of his assumed prerogatives, not only sent down the marines, but decided to keep them there until the republic was rehabilitated.

III

Of the strong-arm methods which the marines employed in the first days of intervention, one hears many stories, and quite possibly the boys were rough.

They landed at a moment's notice, in a country topsyturvy from years of chronic disorder. In those days they faced the task of running the whole republic; they were

confronted with a variety of duties completely new to them; and the qualities which make good shock-troops are often the reverse of those which make good administrators.

It was in the building of roads that they struck their principal snag. They wanted roads in a hurry—mainly, it must be admitted, for their own military purposes in pacifying the country—although no country ever needed roads more sadly than did Haiti. The republic had neither the thoroughfares nor the money wherewith to build them. Wherefore, in 1917, General Smedley Butler revived an old Haitian law permitting the *drafting* of labor.

Now this, locally known as the *corvee* system, had been none too popular, naturally, even in the days of so-called independence. With foreigners enforcing it, forced labor became additionally unpleasant. Local politicians, entrusted with the selection of the draftees, used their authority to excuse their friends and pick their enemies. The marines, to keep their road-workers when they got them, were obliged to lock them in bull-pens overnight. All of which gave anti-American demagogues a glorious opportunity to mount the rostrum and shout:

“The whites are enslaving us again!”

To a race proud of its great tradition of having cast off the shackles of white masters, this was a most effective speech. The road-workers took to the hills, rallying about the standard of defiant *cacaos*—bandits or patriots, according to your viewpoint—and led the marines a merry

chase. That particular uprising lasted for approximately three years, and its suppression cost the lives of about three thousand Haitians.

To that blunder in resurrecting the *corvee* law may perhaps be attributed the change of policy which followed.

The United States sent down specialists to take over the many jobs of the soldiers. The collection of customs and the handling of funds had already been transferred from the marine corps to the newly created office of a Receiver General. Haiti, thanks to him, was now provided with the funds to support a few additional departments. Road building became the function of a Department of Public Works, or Travaux Publiques, while medicine was placed in charge of a Service d'Hygiene.

Both of these in theory were, and are, departments of the Haitian government, as is the Receiver General's office. Their doctors and engineers are mostly from the U. S. Navy, nominated by Washington, but accepted and employed by Port-au-Prince. The work of the several divisions is coordinated under an American High Commissioner, who stands behind the Haitian president, and is generally supposed to tell that executive how to run the republic.

All of which—although it was arranged by a treaty between duly constituted authorities in both countries—savors of the imperialism with which Uncle Sam has been frequently charged in recent years. Its justification, if you would find such, lies in the benefits which the new

departments have brought to Haiti. Today the marines have finished their work; for two or three strategic points such as their barracks behind the presidential palace, they serve to maintain the *status quo*; were they removed, the probability is that a good old-fashioned revolution might materialize overnight; but their business is confined now to sitting on the lid, while the native *gendarmes* play at soldier. The story of the Occupation today is mainly a story of the doctors and the engineers whose praises have yet to be sung.

IV

During my several months in Haiti—both at Cayes and at other places yet to be covered—I was frequently the guest of American officers.

This fact lays me open to the charge, "He's biased in their favor." But such residence gave me at least an unusual opportunity to observe their work and appreciate their difficulties. In Cayes particularly I drove about with the engineer on daily supervising tours over his district—a district with an area approximately that of the State of Delaware—in which he was responsible for all public improvements and construction.

His was no mean task.

"It's taken us thirteen years to bring the republic up to where it was when the negroes drove out the French," he explained as he whizzed over one of his new roads. "We're in the Colonial era now, and just beginning to

forge ahead. We haven't the funds to do much. Haiti follows a pay-as-you-enter policy, and doesn't issue any bonds to obtain money for a highway like this. There are countless things we *want* to do, but we just have to make a choice, and do what seems most important."

Opening up the country with thoroughfares was merely one of the duties of a district engineer.

He had just put up a new modern tank to supply Cayes with water. He had also just completed the job of turning aside the local river, which in the past had periodically overflowed its banks and inundated the town. Its bed was dry at the moment—a wide expanse of sand and smoothly rounded stones—but a good day's rain could transform it into a raging torrent. One saw pictures in Cayes of the floods it once caused, with natives wading knee deep through the main streets or maneuvering about on rafts.

Other old pictures enabled one to appreciate the transformation wrought in the town itself. It was still picturesque today, like everything else in Haiti, but its streets were now paved and guttered and curbed, like those of Port-au-Prince, and were far better than those of most West Indian communities.

Here, as in most Haitian cities, an engineer met with unexpected difficulties merely in putting in the curb. The Haitians had never bothered much about the boundary lines of their property. A road to them was merely an empty space between houses, and at times they encroached upon it with their verandas. It made them very

wrathy when a young Naval Lieutenant, with some crazy new notion that streets should be straight, insisted upon cutting off their porches.

The graveyards also caused trouble. Every now and then in making his road, an engineer would find some one's tombstone in the center of it, and have to move the corpse. It was customary, in such cases, to advertise for claimants. No one ever claimed the grave; the natives seemed fearful lest they have to pay for its moving; but it often led to criticism.

"We get called a good many names at times," Alexis explained. "There was a curious old city gate here when I came—I'll get you a picture of it—which I was obliged to cut down. I hated to destroy it. It was one of the most interesting of old ruins. The only trouble was that it had been here so long, it threatened to fall at any moment, and might have killed a few people. I simply *had* to demolish it, for their own protection. But it brought down a storm of criticism. 'These Americans have no respect for our fine old landmarks.' "

The voice of criticism, of course, was that of the Haitian aristocrat and particularly that of the local newspaper editor.

It worried the engineers here far less than the minor problems they encountered in their work. There was labor, for instance. It was cheap enough—at three *gourdes*, or sixty cents a day, though this was a *gourde* more than laborers in the cane fields received—but it was never too industrious. As one flew over the roads in an auto-

mobile, the gangs of workmen seemed the very embodiment of energy; picks and shovels sent dirt scattering in all directions. But if one left the car, whose roaring motor advertised the coming of a probable boss, and proceeded on foot around a bend, one was apt to find the same gang leaning on the tools, eating mangoes with an air of unlimited leisure.

This was the most completely untrained of labor. In the older Haiti, the peasant had possessed but one tool, the broad-bladed knife known as a *machete*, wherewith he did his limited plowing, chopped down weeds, manicured his nails, or slew the chicken for his Sunday dinner. Even the ditch-diggers had to be taught the use and operation of a shovel. If given a wheel-barrow without specific instructions, they were certain to carry it atop their heads as they carried all other burdens. And when it came to mixing mortar, or laying sewer-pipes, even the gang foremen had to be educated.

Many cases of queer judgment came to my attention. Back in Port-au-Prince, for example, where another American engineer was constructing handsome new government offices, he discovered that his workmen, after putting in some excellent walls, were driving huge spikes through the plaster to provide hooks for their hats and coats. He collected the apparel, and gave it to his time-keeper with the instruction:

"When these fellows come for their things, fire every one of them."

They were most indignant about it. They had merely

been told to make the wall; they had not been specifically instructed not to ruin it afterwards.

Such workers, in most parts of the island, were not difficult to recruit. The Haitians were always eager for employment. But in the south, about the Aux Cayes district where the menfolk frequently emigrated to Cuba in search of the high wages obtainable there, the bosses were often obliged to hire women. It might be criticized by sentimentalists, but there was no alternative, and the women clamored for the jobs. Accustomed as they were to hiking many miles to market, they themselves saw no hardship in swinging pick and shovel. Having a keener responsibility as the supporters of their offspring, they invariably were more dependable. And they were always far more cheerful at their labor.

In Cayes, I used particularly to enjoy visiting one road-gang dominated by a wizened old hag of especially joyous spirit, who led them in song as they worked. She would improvise her own verses, shrieking impromptu thoughts in a poetry which never quite rhymed or which never could have been systematically classified into iambic or pentameter, but which nevertheless carried a catchy sort of swing, and her fellow-workwomen would pause with dirt-laden shovels to join her in an answering chant. Her improvisations were not outstandingly clever, though invariably apropos to the moment.

"All hail to papa engineer," she would screech; "he's the boy that pays us money; with the money we buy bread; all hail to papa engineer."



The picturesque old city gate had become a menace to those who passed beneath it



So the Americans tore it down: in its place one found newly paved streets with curbs and gutters

Then the answering chant. And how that dirt would fly! The weirdly minor refrain would affect them as the rhythm of drums affected native dancers. The queer old girl—she was undersized and scrawny, though with the wiry strength of a nail—seemed never at a loss for ideas. From one of the bosses she learned my own name, and I, like the engineer, became the subject of her lyre.

“Today we sing for papa Fostair; yesterday we did not know him; but today we chance to meet him; so we sing for papa Fostair.”

The old *prima donna* never forgot the name. Perhaps it was because of the tip I gave her in response to the flattery of that first recognition. For upon my every return she would screech:

“Now we sing for papa Fostair; last time here he gave two gourdes; maybe this time he’ll give three; sing a song for papa Fostair!”

v

On other days I accompanied the doctors on their rounds of the dispensaries they maintained.

We had two American surgeons in Cayes, as well as a native medico or two, but so great was their task that on occasion Mr. H——, who held the rank of a pharmacist’s mate in the navy, was called upon to perform the more routine tasks of a physician.

In this department alone—one of about ten in the republic—they held eighteen clinics a week, and treated three thousand patients. H. would start at daybreak in

his auto, driving out through the wilderness to a succession of small villages. On the way, he would call my attention to stray bits of local color:

"See that woman dipping up water from the gutter? There's a new pump within ten yards of her. The engineers just sunk a well. But does she walk the ten yards to get good water? No. She'll use that ditch-stuff for soup."

Eventually we would draw up beside some little building, very neat and white, which served as a dispensary. The population was always awaiting us.

"We used to have a time persuading them to come," H. explained. "The old witch-doctors warned them not to trust us. But nowadays we can scarcely attend to the gangs of them that want treatment."

They stood on line, each laden with an empty beer-bottle for whatever medicine he chose to dole out. He examined them quickly, and aligned them in one of three groups.

"*You* get wormwood. *You* get quinine. *You* get a pickey." It was not an intentionally casual diagnosis; there were a hundred more negroes on the line, and he *had* to hurry through. "Back in the navy," he explained, "I usually gave them castor-oil. Here I give them '606.'"

There was physic for the youngsters—castor and wormwood oil—for they suffered mostly from worms. They screamed and kicked and wriggled, but their mothers turned them forcefully upon their heads, and poured the medicine into them. Malaria was another popu-

lar ailment. Also hookworm. But the syphilitics were in the majority; they stood in patient ranks, ready to take the jab of the needle.

In other districts, conditions were much the same. From Cape Haitien, in the north of the island, one received impressive statistics—two thousand patients annually entertained in the hospital, three hundred major operations performed last year, eighty thousand shots of salvarsan administered. Of its own shortcomings, the *Service d'Hygiene* was only too keenly aware. "What sort of medicine is practised," it inquired in its own printed report, "when two doctors can treat 950 people in one day? We agree with our critics that it is not medicine of the highest order." But each department did its best. Five hundred thousand natives, or one-fourth the total population, reported to the rural clinics within a year. There were 106 stations for such clinics, and the doctors visited them by auto, by horseback, by small boat, or even by foot, weekly if not oftener. It was no small problem for a handful of Yankee physicians—there were about thirty here at the time I visited Haiti—to wipe out disease in a country of over 10,000 miles of jungle.

In the *Service d'Hygiene*, as in the *Travaux Publiques*, the main need was for more funds. Haiti's income, derived largely from duties on exports or imports, averaged about 45,000,000 *gourdes* a year, or approximately \$9,000,000. Of this, however, a good share went to pay off the old public debt, the country's main bequest from "independence." When various other accounts were settled,

the medical department got about 3,000,000 gourdes.

"Our consolation," said one doctor, "is that we make it accomplish what we can; in the old days it all went into the pockets of the politicians and the generals. But does Haiti appreciate it?"

Not aristocratic Haiti. And certainly not the former politicians and generals. Even the peasants seemed very much puzzled, and one heard them conversing outside the clinics:

"These *blancs* give us this medicine for nothing? Are you sure? Nobody used to do it!"

VI

I am personally not in favor of this or any other enforced Occupation, but it must be admitted that the average Haitian was far better off under it than he ever had been under his so-called independence.

His income had not increased perceptibly since the old days, but he at least enjoyed peace and the right to work if he wished to. And those who worked for the present government *did* receive their wages in cash.

I always looked forward to pay-day as a gala occasion. Then Al and I would be up long before daybreak. One enjoyed all the thrills of burglary as we invaded the office in the pre-dawn twilight, tinkered with the safe, and extracted the envelopes filled with bank-notes. Thereafter would follow a furious drive to the bridge, three hours' distant, where this engineering district began.

The darkies, in an expectant group, were always there to await us. A foreman read off their names:

"Here, Oxygen, Accident." (They were as effusive here in their choice of nomenclature as negroes in other lands.) "Excellent Kola." (Kola, a local soft-drink, had evidently been a favorite beverage with that gentleman's mother.) "Abysynthe, Houri, Jezebel, Shrapnel, Picanniny, l'Affliction, Messalliance." There was one who most appropriately had been baptized, "Brunette."

Each, as his title was called, came striding forward, a little diffident, doffing his hat as he took the bills and immediately counted them. Occasionally one would start to argue. The foreman thereupon would wave an impatient stick, and the native, knowing himself wrong, would pass on. . . . From time to time, along the way, the engineer would discover new troubles of his own. Here he had bought a native house, intending to destroy it and carry the road through it; that would mean cutting off an annoying curve; but the local foreman had carried the road right up to the dwelling and then had made a still sharper circle around it. At another place the foreman was employing the women road-workers to do his private washing. We stopped to lecture him. . . . All along the road creditors sat in wait—plump women of the type who bought the cotton on market days—prepared to pounce upon their debtors as soon as we paid them off, and we left in our wake a trail of small private quarrels. This, at least, was not *our* affair.

So we came to the final gang—that gang near Cayes, over which our old song-leader presided.

The bosses here had found that the most effective means of establishing discipline was to institute a system of petty fines, administered whenever they caught their workers loafing, and this grand old lady was on the list. She was fined two *gourdes* for that day after a night before, when she had showed up with a hang-over and had slept several hours upon a convenient hay-rick instead of plying her shovel. As we paid her off, with the reduction in salary, she glowered her resentment. Then she burst into song again—into most angry song—sticking her wizened mug against the wind-shield of our car, and shrieking out sentiments anent the stinginess, injustice, brutality, and one thing or another, of the district engineer, while the rest of the girls, with forward-pushed, aggressive faces, and brandished tools, joined in a suitably angry chant.

But hostility, on the part of these *lowlier* peasants, was never very strong. I later gave her the two *gourdes* myself which had been eliminated from her pay-check, and immediately the whole attitude changed. Shovels dug deep, and the dirt flew with increased enthusiasm. And the old lady sang her damndest:

“Here’s to good old papa Fostair; papa Fostair give two *gourdes*; papa Fostair’s face is white, but thank god, his heart is black; papa Fostair’s heart is black; black, black, black, black!”

CHAPTER XIV

AFOOT IN THE HAITIAN HILLS

I

It was time to hit the trail.

During my stay on the south coast, I had fallen into the habit of studying Haiti from an upholstered auto-seat, or from a bungalow veranda, and old-timers in the tropics love to tell you of the authors who come down there and confine themselves to that.

"Well, if you *do* insist on hiking," said my engineer friend, "there's a trail of sorts across the peninsula to Jeremie. It's one of the roads such as we found here in the early days, and the dotted line on the map flatters it quite a little. But if you just keep heading northward, you're certain to come out sooner or later on the other side of the hills."

He drove me one afternoon to the town of Camp Perin, where the dots commenced; the local mayor put me up for the night; and the following morning I set out on foot toward Haiti's lofty mountains.

II

I was rather surprised when my guide reported punctually. It was altogether too unusual, for no trip in a foreign country begins properly without some hours of

delay, during which one walks up and down, fretting and cursing, and wondering where that confounded carrier is. And mine stood ready on the veranda when I arose, hours before the dawn!

He was a lean and rangey youth, borrowed from the service of the *Travaux Publiques*. His only speech was *creole*. But he knew the way, and having shouldered my small knapsack, strode off at a rapid gait.

It was an unostentatious departure. Upon the irregular row of porches which bordered the village street, native marketers still lay sleeping stolidly; a few stray cocks crowed half-heartedly at a paling moon; the only creature in town who turned out to bid us "bon voyage" was an old, bewhiskered goat, who stood atop a rock at the edge of town, surveying us with puzzled curiosity, as we swung off upon the road.

Trail?

One could scarcely call it *that*. For a mile or so it justified the title, but it soon dwindled. A few heavy showers on the night before had left it wet and muddy, and dripping weeds overhung it. My boy soon discarded his sandals, and rolled his pants to the knees. But he did not slacken his long-legged strides as he led on along stoney river beds, or pulled himself up steep inclines by clutching at trees ahead, or scrambled, quite like a goat himself, from one rock to another.

He was altogether *too* energetic and I soon realized that my months of loafing in Cayes had been no fit prelude to a strenuous mountain climb. He seemed bent

on making some sort of a record. He splashed through ankle-deep sloughs without a pause. Then up, up, up, scaling the face of a precipice. At the top I called a halt; the sun, bursting gorgeously through a fleet of dismal clouds, had opened magnificent vistas of forested valleys behind us; and a breakfast on bananas purchased from a passing market-girl provided the excuse for a brief rest.

As we continued, we met other travellers. Nowhere in this Haiti, even in its remotest wilderness, was one far from sight or sound of the crowded inhabitants. Most of those we encountered were dull-faced country girls, and they usually were startled at the sight of an unexpected white man. To my greeting, they sometimes responded with an unintelligible grunt or rumble; the majority, however, were punctilious in replying to whatever I said, in the manner of parrots, using exactly the words *I* used, and omitting the "Monsieur" unless I supplied the "Madame."

"Bon jour."

"Bo' jou'."

"Bon jour, Madame."

"Bo' jou', m'su."

It was by no means the first time that a *blanc* (white man) had crossed this trail, yet in the Haitian hills he was still a creature of great interest. The few natives headed in our direction were eager to join our party, in order to watch me and discuss me, and my boy took inordinate pride in explaining to those we met my identity

and my mission, giving me an exaggerated importance—as native guides will—in order to enhance his own glory as my servitor.

The news of our advent preceded us, by what Haiti knows as the “bamboo telegraph.” Some say that the natives here send secret messages through their mountains by the beating of tom-toms or by a system of puffs of smoke. I doubt this. Voices, which are seldom modulated in this country, carry clearly across the hills, and are quite sufficient for the dissemination of news. Every man or woman here is a high-powered broadcasting station, equipped with his own loud-speaker. The chatter of our increasing group could be heard far ahead, and served notice of my coming, while occasionally some one would pause upon a hill-top to shout across the valleys:

“Here comes a *blanc*! Come out and see the *blanc*!”

It was rarely that we surprised other travellers now. At each thatched hut in the jungle they were lined up, waiting for me, and were vastly disappointed if we did not pause for conversation. Sociability is an outstanding characteristic of any darkie, and doubly so in those of French or once-French islands. It seemed to me that my boy should tire of explaining me to the many curious inquirers, but he never did; at every stop he would recite his piece with greater enthusiasm; indeed, he seemed quite as proud as an organ-grinder who exhibits a newly acquired monkey.

“Here comes a *blanc*! Watch for the *blanc*!”

All rustic Haiti turned out, prepared for a free circus.

III

The way grew steadily worse.

Roads, with the exception of the main highways built since the Occupation, were born rather than made in this country. They just grew up, like Topsy. In places, our course would wind and twist without the slightest reason, unless it was to pass another hut or farm-house where travellers might stop to exchange gossip, and for every mile of progress we made, we walked some ten or twenty.

No one, it appeared, had ever made the least effort to improve or repair the trail. In some places generations of native hikers had worn it deep below the rest of the countryside, and it was a narrow, eighteen-inch-wide cañon between steep, fungus-covered walls, and filled with muddy pools. It never lost an opportunity to straggle down into the wet hollows and then scale a slippery cliff of clay beyond. And to add to our difficulties, the rain promised in early morning presently began to fall, first in a refreshing shower, but finally in a continuous deluge which made the whole path a raging watercourse.

And still that guide led on! Dwellings became less frequent, and he did not pause for rest. There was nothing lazy about these Haitians when they actually hit the trail; if anything, they were *too* energetic; and lifelong practice had given them all the expertness of Alpine mountaineers.

Slop, slop, slop, through muddy water!

I *knew* by this time that my loafing sojourn in Cayes

had been no ideal training for this jaunt. My trousers, caked with mud to the hips, became as much an encumbrance as my shoes, and presently I was obliged to get out my pocket-knife, and cut off the offending garments, converting them into "shorts." Thus cleared for action, I continued, to the great joy of the natives, who screamed with laughter at the white knees which showed between the rim of underdrawers and garters.

The trail continued to ascend. According to the guidebooks, the highest peak in the island—the ten-thousand foot peak of Loma Tina—was over in Santo Domingo, but I felt sure the geographers had misplaced it. Up, up, up! At times we crawled on hands and knees, grasping for help at weeds ahead. And at the very top, we found a huge morass. Now swamps belong in lowlands, but one might have expected something unusual in Haiti; here was one at the very tip of the mountains, and it extended for over a mile.

We wallowed through it. Then down, down, down, eternally down we went, leaping from rock to rock. It would be an embarrassing place in which to break a leg, I reflected, and hoped that if I fell I might land upon my neck. There was nothing but wilderness here, sheer wilderness without a habitation—an eternal jungle of dank fern and gloomy thicket, and giant trees that dripped with constant rain. The air was heavy with the mouldy smell of rotted vegetation. Only a deep green twilight filtered through the canopy of leaves high over-

head. One wondered what the hour could be, and whether night were falling? Yet we found no stopping-places, and the natives showed no sign of fatigue.

There were some thirty blacks in our party now, as well as a horse and a bull. The horse, just ahead of me, had a tendency whenever we came to one of the deep, foot-wide ravines, to halt and lash with his heels. The bull, just behind me, always resented such sudden stops, and gave evidence of a growing determination to lower his head and charge.

Trying to watch them both, I finally missed my step. I tripped and plunged, and went catapulting down the slope for a hundred feet or more, to land uninjured in another muddy pool. After those hours on the trail, I actually rejoiced at the mishap. A hundred feet gained without expenditure of effort! Above me, a tiny patch of open heaven revealed the fact that it *was* night. And just ahead there twinkled a lamp from the first thatched hut we had seen in ages. The day's journey was completed!

IV

At intervals, throughout the interior of the Haitian republic, one finds the headquarters of a constable.

He is really something more than a preserver of the peace; his full title is usually "Chief of Section;" he collects taxes and performs many similar duties; he is invariably regarded as the leading person in his com-

munity; and I had a letter from the Gendarmerie captain in Cayes, instructing all *chefs de section* to entertain me and facilitate my progress.

Monsieur Blanquette, who presided over the little thatched house ahead, proved charmingly hospitable.

Although his was the finest local residence, it was not exactly palatial. It was built of rude, whitewashed boards, roofed with a thatch of grass and palm-fronds, and furnished very meagerly. The floor was of clay. There was a plain wooden table, a rickety chair or two, a saddle and rifle on the wall. A partition divided the establishment into two compartments, a living room and a bed room. A few loose boards overhead, laid carelessly across the rafters, provided an attic, from which hung a blanket or two, and such baskets of provender as a far-from-wealthy owner could afford.

But my host and hostess hastened to do the honors, and this without bothering to read the instructions from their Gendarmerie official. Madame at once draped her table with a neat red-and-white-checkered cloth of domino design. Monsieur, a grave-faced darkie with a dignity befitting his local rank, served me with a cup of syrupy black coffee flavored with a generous splash of native rum, which at once made the world look brighter. And when I had finished the supper which followed, they offered me their own bed!

This was true kindness. It was somewhat more than a bed to these Haitians; it was even a symbol of do-

mestic felicity and social distinction. I had heard back at Cayes the story of one native who refused to marry the lady with whom he had lived for forty years, because he could not afford a couch.

"I've been sleeping with my woman on a mat on the floor," he admitted, without concern for the lack of ceremony, "but I simply couldn't marry her. Everybody who marries, buys a bed. My friends would all laugh at me because I haven't got one. No, we'll just have to keep on as in the past."

The couch which Monsieur Blanquette offered was defective in a few respects. Its surface sloped and curved like a storm at sea. It was filled with queer lumps, as though its maker, in stuffing it with palm-fronds, had put in a few of the cocoanuts for good measure. And it contained its share of cooties. These last were quite common in rural Haiti, and whenever an American engineer came home from a trip in the hills, it was quite customary for him to strip in the barn and spray himself with "flit" before daring to enter his house. But the generosity with which these Haitians gave up their priceless possession to the use of a stray traveller commanded one's gratitude. And what matter a few cooties when one is completely fatigued?

I went to sleep to the throb of drums from some other hut in the neighborhood, and they sounded more weird and primitive than they ever had sounded in Cayes. . . . There was a patter of rain on the thatched roof above,

promising another wet trail upon the morrow. . . . Then—miraculously—it *was* the morrow, and the sky was blue and clear!

v

I felt no haste about starting again, so I paused to boil some drinking-water, and to dry my rain-soaked clothing.

When at last I did set off, the path was still a swamp; perspiration soon dampened my shirt again; and the drinking-water, slow to cool, afforded little refreshment. But the day, at least, was fair, and our route, now that we had topped the higher ridges, had fewer ups and downs.

Along the way were many native farms, often most picturesque. They stood usually in a little clearing, surrounded by rank masses of bananas and coffee trees, with royal or cocoanut palms towering above them, and always with a background of huge mountains, steaming from yesterday's storm. There was usually one good house, like the one in which I had passed the night; near it was an open cook-shed, with smoke curling from the crevices in its thatch; and sometimes there was an additional storeroom, perched on high piles, its posts blocked with balls of mud to keep the local rats from climbing them.

At each such hamlet, the natives were sure to offer me coffee and rum. The coffee they picked from their own backyards and dried upon their front door-steps.



"Along the way were many native farms in tiny clearings, often most picturesque"



"Sometimes there was a store-room on piles, its posts blocked with mud-balls against the rats"

The lady of the house would brew it in some old tin can of boiling water, into which she dipped a cloth filled with the coffee berries. On one occasion she used an old sock, of questionable sanitary quality. But the product was always rich and syrupy; the native rum, a terrible beverage when one drank it alone, blended excellently with the coffee. The stimulant was always welcome, for although one stopped at these places sweating from a stiff climb, a few moment's rest left one shivering from the cool mountain air.

At each house, as I sat on the veranda to sip this nectar, a host of chickens would surround me. No farmhouse in Haiti, however limited its furnishings, was lacking in barnyard fowl. Ill-fed and ravenous creatures, they would come running from every direction to fight over the banana-peelings I cast aside, and to pounce even upon my cigarette butts.

The game-cocks alone seemed to be regarded by their owners as worthy of attention. At one of our stops, the possessor of a highly-prized bird fed him from corn carefully guarded in his own hat, while other birds hovered about, hoping for a chance to steal some of it. And while I was focussing my own attention on the group, another hungry rooster came sneaking up to snatch a banana from my hand, and to go streaking across the barnyard, followed by a clucking harem of hens.

This awakened a vengeful spirit on my part. I negotiated the purchase of that particular rooster—he cost exactly one *gourde*, or twenty cents—but when he

reached the table, fried black and carved into unrecognizable portions, I searched in vain for any meat. A career of long and distinguished service as the father of ten thousand eggs had made him a skeleton of skin and bones, and I doubt that he contained as much nutrition as the banana he had stolen.

At all of my halts, the natives would gather about me as thickly as the chickens—the women in shapeless blue gowns, with towels tied turban-like about their heads; the men in the *vareuse*, a shirt-like jacket which hung outside their trousers. A few of the latter, evidently persons of comparative importance in their village, would advance very formally to greet me with a limp handshake, but the majority just formed a tight circle, staring blatantly in the manner of astonished children.

It was the sort of staring one encounters in all primitive lands, from Central China to Guadeloupe. In most places one is able to frown them down by returning the gaze intently, at the same time repeating to one's self, "What the hell are *you* looking at?" until the idea reaches them by some species of mental telepathy. But it did not work in Haiti. The stupid country-louts in the hills were too blandly unaware that they were guilty of bad manners. And I must have presented an interesting spectacle now, with my breeches torn off above the knees, revealing a strip of underwear and a set of Paris garters.

Occasionally, when we happened to surprise a group of small children on the road, they ran away in terror,

glancing back and screaming. Adults just formed the familiar rapt crowd, waiting hopefully for whatever entertainment I might offer next. My most trivial operations fascinated them. Scribbling notes! Eating with fork and knife! Shaving with a safety razor!

It was my habit of boiling my drinking water which caused the most discussion. Back in Guadeloupe I had contracted a touch of dysentery. Although I have not harped upon its unpleasant and sometimes embarrassing details, it had persisted throughout my voyage from Basse Terre to Port-au-Prince, and had nearly caused my death. I still suffered from its weakening effect, and meant to risk no recurrence. As I sat beside kitchen fires, boiling the water for the fifteen minutes required to kill the germs, the people watched in puzzlement.

It was very much of a nuisance, this task, and I was glad when my boy—a rather bright youth, it seemed—undertook to perform it for me. But presently I noted the speed with which he filled my two bottles at each halt. They were precious possessions in this land, and I feared that his haste might result in breaking the glass. When I protested, he smilingly showed me that he had appreciated the fact. He had *not* poured them full of boiling water. Instead he had been filling them nine-tenths of the way with ordinary water from the nearest roadside ditch, and then pouring in a tiny dash of the boiled!

After this I ceased all precautions, and fortunately no unpleasantness resulted.

VI

So passed the days on this journey, each rather like the one before.

I had brought no watch, and travelling through the interior one lost all count of time. My queries regarding the distance in hours or in miles to the next constabulary headquarters, brought little satisfaction from the guide. He had no conception of such things, having never in his life possessed a clock or a pedometer.

I recalled another yarn which I had heard, of a Haitian who purchased a wrist-watch from a local merchant.

"He asked what time it was, and set the hands. But an hour or so later, in he came again, asked what time it was now, and set it again. Throughout the day he kept returning, to do the same thing. Finally the jeweller got sore. But the native wasn't trying to kid him. He really didn't know that he could wind it up and make it run itself."

It was only when we began to encounter parties of masqueraders on the road that I realized Easter was approaching.

They wore a garb not altogether dissimilar to that which I had seen during the Mardi-Gras in Pointe-à-Pitre, the men using their wives' clothing, turning it inside out, supplementing it with strings of gaudy ribbon, and wearing dunce-hats on their heads. The first group was merely on a pilgrimage between hamlets when we met them, but they quickly staged a performance, march-

ing and countermarching with a peculiar stooping posture and pounding their bare feet in unison.

It was not a particularly brilliant exhibition, but I gave the leader a gourde for the rum which they seemed to expect. This, however, was just a beginning. From time to time we met other parties, and as the day wore on, they became more boisterous. I grew somewhat tired of distributing money along the road, and at my repeated refusals, an occasional group appeared highly resentful.

We were in a territory now quite unfamiliar to my guide. Each *chef de section* to whom we paid our respects furnished a courier who conducted us to the next town. But when we reached the headquarters of *Lucius Luke, Chaudonnette, 6 Section de Corail*, Luke happened to be absent.

My boy was furious.

In one of his elaborate speeches, which by this time had become a habit, he addressed the assembled villagers, pointing to me and making the usual tribute to my importance. The villagers were no doubt impressed. But they also happened, by this time, to be drunk, and their mayor was absent on a souse-party of his own. A few youths were dispatched in various directions, with some vague plan of locating him, but none of them came back to report progress. The rattle of drums, echoing from many points in the surrounding hills, informed us that Good Friday was being generally celebrated hereabouts, and Luke no doubt was tripping the light fantastic.

As we waited, an old native came wandering into the

clearing, leading a goat, and carrying a broad-bladed *machete*, the huge cane-knife without which few rural Haitians travel. He was a funny-looking fellow, as lean and scrawny as the local roosters, and he had a peculiarly rooster-like gait. Whether he were crazy or merely intoxicated, I was unable to determine, but upon sighting me, he *too* made a speech, which sounded alternately respectful and threatening, and finally he started to dance. He did a solo bit around and around the goat, to the great astonishment of that animal.

One could only ponder at the meaning or intent of this ludicrous performance.

In the old voodoo rituals of Haiti, the goat had played an important part. Sometimes it seems to have been worshipped, though usually it was sacrificed. There is one tale on record of a Haitian president, Simon, who was a devotee of the voodoo doctors, but who also made certain of his soul's salvation by attending mass at the Catholic Church on Sunday. When his favorite goat died, he did his best for the animal's soul by embalming it in a human coffin and tricking the priests into blessing it. Today it is said that no local father will perform his duties without first examining the contents of the casket. . . . I also recalled that it was somewhere up in these same hills that my engineers had stumbled upon that party headed for a cemetery with a robed goat.

This goat before me now was not robed, but his horns were tied with streamers of ribbon. And the dance which

the rooster-like old man performed for my benefit did not seem to win the favor of my guide.

"*'Ou fou!*" the boy informed him. "You're a fool! You're a fool! You're a lunatic!"

But the queer old man continued to jig, circling around and around the animal. I have no explanation to offer for all this. It was a puzzling and inexplicable performance—and certainly a weird one, out there in the middle of Haiti's mountainous jungle, where I'd lost all track of time or distance.

I was ready to push on, but my boy was unwilling; he indicated that it would be advisable to wait until the *Chef de Seccion* showed up, to provide a constable for escort.

The rain, however, which had held off throughout most of this day, was commencing to fall again. Muddy Haitian trails gave me far greater concern than a few drunken natives, and I decided to continue the march. The boy, after a few protests, finally followed. And so did the old gentleman with the goat.

We formed an odd procession.

From the thatched huts we passed, the drumming appeared quite general now. The sound of another chant came to us over the valley, rising and falling in a minor refrain, dimmed at times by an intervening hill, then swelling into a deep-lunged roar as still another party of maskers burst upon us.

There were about forty of them in *this* crowd. They

dressed like the others, but each man carried a toy wooden sabre, its tip dyed blood-red, and having circled around me several times, brandishing their weapons, they too fell into line behind me, still singing and dancing. Their song was somewhat like that of the old woman road-worker in Cayes, with a line or two of solo from the leader, to which the others replied. At times his recitation consisted of only a word or two, with brief response; at other times he composed a considerable ditty before the rest chimed in; always there was a certain lilt and balance about it.

This was something altogether different from the *bambache* I had witnessed in Cayes, and I later learned that it was called a "rah-rah." The stamping and stooping were familiar, but there was nothing sensuous in the posturing. Through it all the natives maintained an air of peculiar absorption; upon their faces was registered an almost tragic solemnity.

Being followed for hour after hour through the wilderness by this strange party finally got on my nerves, and I felt frankly relieved when nightfall brought us to another constabulary headquarters, whose chief did happen to be at home. But this village proved also to be the destination of the rah-rah boys.

When I gave them another *gourde*, they disbanded with a brief chorus of "*Merci à Monsieur*," yet it was only a short time before the same gang returned, now greatly increased in numbers.

They became very much of a nuisance. Each round



"The natives headed in our direction joined the party to watch me
and discuss me"



"The rattle of voodoo drums echoed from jungles along the way;
Good Friday was being celebrated"

of drink seemed merely to increase the prevailing thirst. The Haitian was probably as inured to the effects of alcohol as the negro of the other West Indies; drunkenness was something seldom carried to extremes in the republic; but the peasants here, as in most southern lands, looked upon a holiday, even a religious holiday, as a rather special occasion. Good Friday must be celebrated!

It also happened that the *Chef de Seccion*, with whom I stayed on this night, was about the only man in the locality who had any liquor left. One found no saloons in this mountain district—nor shops, nor schools, nor post-offices, nor other adjuncts of civilization. When the urge for food or rum was felt, the natives generally looked to the few local citizens who had been more provident than themselves. And tonight, although the dancers would occasionally wander off to serenade some one else, they kept returning again and again to headquarters, hoping for another treat.

The chief himself grew tired of the repeated visits. Once he served a general round at his own expense; thereafter he delivered the ultimatum that they must pay cash. They looked to me as the only available philanthropist. One after another addressed me, in pleas which steadily took on a more threatening note, and when they danced, they brandished their wooden knives more angrily in my direction.

There was no danger. It proved, as I suspected, that they were seeking merely to intimidate me. For when, with affected indifference I bade them, "*Bonne nuit*," and

sat down to supper with an air of finality, they peacefully subsided. But now they resorted to cajolery. They performed various new bits of charade in the hope of winning my approval. And at length two of them made their appearance with a stuffed effigy.

It was a rather ingenious figure, filled with straw, dressed in Haitian garb, and mounted upon a chair which the bearers had slung on two long poles across their shoulders. The more intoxicated of the natives scrambled for the honor of carrying the scarecrow, whirling and cavorting beneath it, while the rest marched and counter-marched in a close-packed group behind it. The effigy being slightly unbalanced and the carriers more so, the whole procession landed in the dust from time to time, whereupon newcomers would rush in with shrill cries and much waving of swords, to fight for possession of the poles.

Mildly amusing at first, the long-continued horse-play became insupportably tedious. I finally made a speech of my own, instructing them to shut up and clear out, and they evidently caught the purport of it. The *Chef de Seccion* added his own voice, expressing the same sentiments. And at last they did take their departure, though their chant re-echoed from some other clearing across the road until late into the night.

It had all been a weird, perplexing holiday. But as I listened to the song that still rang out across the hills, I caught a familiar, oft-repeated word:

“Ju-da! Ju-da! Ju-da!”

The explanation dawned. I had seen several slightly similar performances among the Yaqui Indians of Mexico, and the Aymaras of Bolivia—primitive folk who had grafted strange bits of the Catholic religion upon the older barbaric rites of their forefathers. That stuffed scarecrow which they carried was evidently the figure of Judas. The men with their imitation knives were defenders of the faith. For two more days they would taunt and punish this effigy of the man who betrayed their Jesus Christ. And on Easter they would bury him, perhaps with their voodoo goat.

I was still among good Christians!

CHAPTER XV

THE SPIRITS OF JEREMIE

I

It was evident that we were coming out of the bush.

Another day found us traversing great forests of coffee trees—not mere bushes, like those of Brazil or Central America—but mighty woodland monarchs.

No one pruned them, or dug around them; they simply grew up, like the trail itself, without attention; they formed an impenetrable wilderness of interlacing branches, as rank as any natural jungle. Yet they were harbingers of the coast, where early French colonists had established settlements; we passed the crumbled walls of an occasional ruined château; we presently glimpsed the Gulf of Gonave, and came out, along toward sunset, upon the straggling village of Roseau.

It was still many miles to Jeremie, my eventual destination, and Roseau contained no hotel. It did, however, contain a small *gendarmerie* barracks, recognizable at once by its fresh yellow paint in a town where no one wasted the fluid on private dwellings, and I promptly headed for it. Recalling the statement of Lieut. B. in Cayes that the cleanest lodging in rural Haiti was apt to be the jail, I meant to ask the sergeant if he could spare me a cell for the night.

But this proved unnecessary. He beckoned me to the old wall-telephone, and I found Jeremie's district engineer at the other end of the line.

"Foster? Al sent word that you were coming. This is Taylor, Colonel Taylor, speaking. Can you walk ten more miles and cross a few rivers tonight? They're too deep for my car, but I'll meet you *somewhere* on the road. You're going to be my guest."

II

The thought of a real bed awaiting me was an inspiration and a stimulant.

To my boy it held less allurements. Although he had started our jaunt with a most abundant energy, he was now completely fagged out. On his frightfully rugged mountain trails he was quite at home, but on a level and civilized road he found difficulty. The tiny pebbles wherewith it was paved hurt his feet. And although in the interior he had often graciously relieved me of *my* knapsack, I now enjoyed the satisfaction of being able to lend a hand with *his*.

In other tropical countries I had often had the same identical experience with native guides, who always embark upon a journey with great enthusiasm but seldom are capable of sustained effort, and who invariably lack the will-power that goads a white man on to a final, exhaustive effort.

"Come on, boy! Last sprint!"

What indeed was a last sprint to *him*? The mud floor of one hut was as comfortable as that of the next.

A swift-falling night caught us just as we left Roseau. The road uncurled before us in a long ribbon of ghostly moonlight. Through the sea-fringe of the coco-palms one glimpsed the shadowy white of the breakers. In the forests of the landward side fireflies winked, and candles flickered from distant native houses. And again, as always, I felt that sense of mystery that pervades all Haiti when darkness settles upon it.

It seemed to depress the few stray travelers we met. They did not greet us as in the daytime, but edged toward the farther side of the roadway, and hurried quickly past. Perhaps, as I loomed unexpectedly out of the night, still a vision of pallid skin with my trousers reduced to no more than a loin cloth, they took me for some bogey.

I even found a mild amusement in being taken for a ghost, and was tempted to heighten the effect by emitting a deep groan. But when, coming to our first river, we stopped at a neighboring home to inquire where the stream could best be forded, the residents were distrustful of the apparition that rose suddenly up at their doorstep. They hastily bolted the doors; from inside came a droning voice which I judged to be engaged in prayer; and to my boy's repeated knocking it merely mumbled what sounded very much like, "Scat!"

We finally discovered the ford ourselves, wading out to the river's edge, to a reef which barred the mouth of

it, and feeling our way carefully across through showers of driving spray. Beyond were other streams, mostly mere brooks that trickled down from the hills. But farther beyond came another torrent, much the widest and deepest of them all.

It rose to my knees, my waist, my arm-pits. One found it difficult to maintain a balance upon the mossy rocks. I stumbled and lost my pack. And a cry of terror informed me that I was also losing my boy. He was sailing quite merrily down the center of the stream, toward a sea not a hundred yards distant!

I managed to catch him, and he promptly grabbed my throat. Presumably, like most mountain-dwellers, he was unable to swim, and was thoroughly frantic. We battled in the surf until I broke his hold. Thereupon he seized a foot, which pleased me much better. He was a decided encumbrance, but I finally landed him on the farther shore, where we both stretched out, soaked, and gasping for breath.

It was a cheering sight when a pair of automobile searchlights came beaming through the gloom, and a spare, weather-tanned gentleman, unmistakably "army" in type, bundled us into his car to whirl quickly away toward another comfortable bungalow, where a spare pair of trousers awaited!

III

Colonel Taylor, now in civilian life after many campaigns in Mexico, the Philippines, and France, held in

Jeremie the same position as district engineer which my friend had held in Cayes; he, too, was a most hospitable host; and he, too, took me on many rambles over his territory.

In several respects, Jeremie was unique among Haitian cities.

It was one of the very oldest, yet practically the only town of any importance which—at the moment of my visit—had yet to be reached by motor road. Its streets twisted and meandered uncertainly up the steep slopes that rose from the bay, paved and curbed by the engineers as in all other cities, yet following the irregular course which early French colonists had given them. Even the houses seemed more ancient, as a rule, than those of other communities, their fancy balconies supported by posts which curved like cocoanut palms. There were fighting cocks tied to these posts, and upon many a veranda high above the sidewalk, a horse or a donkey was parked.

Down at the wharf lay a fleet of tiny schooners—the principal means of communication with the capital—and sweating black stevedores marched aboard them in an endless stream, bent beneath hundred-pound sacks of coffee. They often chanted a chorus, like those work-women in Cayes, and one that always expressed their sentiments of the moment:

“If I don’t get this blank-blanked thing off my head,” the leader would sing, and the rest would answer with. “It’s goin’ to kill you.”



"I promptly headed for the jail to ask the sergeant if he had an empty cell to spare"



"The graves which lined the way were packed so closely that one wondered how they got the bodies in"

As everywhere in Haiti this coffee was the main export, but Jeremie also was outstandingly famous for its rum. Out behind the town were many large cane-fields, and one found here venerable distilleries, whose cane-crushers drew their power from waterwheels run by old French aqueducts.

One also found many other relics of Colonial days. The roofs of the old mansions had fallen long ago, yet the massive walls and foundations indicated their one-time grandeur. There were fine old curving stairways; the remains of fountains.

In a few of these old *chateaux* negro squatters had settled, building a crude lean-to of thatch over a floor of handsome tiles. Most of them were too far gone even for that; the jungle had claimed them, covering them with creeping vines, and sending its great trees up through every crevice. That jungle, about Jeremie, was a most irrepressible one. Even when the trees were cut down, and hewed into fence posts, they kept on sprouting. This is something which one hears in many tropical lands, and which, unless one actually sees it, one is apt to take with a grain of salt. As we drove back toward the city, however, we passed through long stretches of road bordered by these fences, every rail of which sent out a multitude of branches that were covered with leaves and even with blossoms!

One old ruin was pointed out as the home of the elder Dumas, the grandfather of Alexandre. This old Marquis had married Marie Cessette, a local girl, coal black. It

had been good form in those days, and everybody did it.

This Jeremie, in fact, had been quite a center of miscegenation, and from earliest times the intimacy of master with slave was more marked than elsewhere in Haiti. The slaves, too, were much more contented than anywhere else, even more so than in Cayes. It probably happened that the French were more kindly to them. Anyhow, when the revolution broke in the north, up around Cape Haitien, the negroes of Jeremie warned their masters to flee, and in some cases even facilitated their escape.

Jeremie had had more than the usual quota of mulattoes even then, and after the great conflagration had subsided, and white merchants began to drift back to Haiti, they probably found their warmest welcome here. At any rate the population today was lighter than that of other communities. One saw plenty of blacks, and near-blacks, but a coffee-shade prevailed, and the girls showed a craving for lightness in the lavishness with which they used face-powder. It gave them a pastey grayness of complexion, and as in most southern countries they always neglected a tell-tale neck, but powdering was very much the fashion.

One noted also that shoes were more generally worn here than elsewhere, an infallible criterion of social standing throughout the tropics. And today—my first day being Easter Sunday—the aristocrats were all out in their very best garb, many of the men in frock coats or even in full evening dress, conversing in little groups with a

punctiliousness of manner befitting the dress and the occasion. They stood out in queer contrast to that background of tumbled-down mansions, and fighting-cocks, and horses parked on sidewalks.

IV

In Jeremie one of the great gathering-places of the élite was Emelie's saloon.

Not that it was palatial. In fact, it was such a shabby, plain-board establishment that I instinctively glanced about in the expectation of seeing a few rosy-cheeked houris in knee-length scarlet dresses, such as one often does encounter in a water-front joint that *looks* like hers.

The only girls in sight, however, were Emelie's own several daughters, who dressed and behaved very modestly. And Emelie's personality—combined with the lack of a better resort—made her little place extremely popular. She was a brown and buxom lady, with a matrimonial record longer than that of Peggy Hopkins Joyce, and in character she much resembled the famed Lovaina of Tahiti. She hailed all guests most jovially by whatever nicknames they might happen to possess, and for those who lacked an intimate title, she could always supply one.

She could also shake a cocktail. To her board came even the local rum-distillers to buy a glass of their own rum, improved by Emelie's judicious admixture of lime and sugar. And here also, in late afternoon, the Ameri-

can colony might gather for a half hour before dinner, to swap yarns over one of her concoctions.

It was a colony of about the same size and composition as that at Cayes, and wrestling with much the same difficulties.

The Colonel, for example, had recently undertaken to improve the public plaza which stood in the center of town. In every Haitian plaza—invariably a barren square fronted by the cathedral—there stands one lone royal palm. It is the emblem found on the Haitian shield, this palm which never bends with the wind as others do but always grows straight, and it is the symbol of independence. In Jeremie the natives wished a bandstand built in their park, also in the center, but objected to the transplanting of the palm.

"It made the plaza look slightly cock-eyed," the engineer explained. "If I could have moved that palm about ten feet, and put the stand in the middle of the square, they would have balanced nicely. But that palm, of course, was sacred, and furthermore there were a couple of graves under it. No one could remember whose graves they were, but everybody assumed that they must be those of some great national heroes. So I had to leave them."

The odd denouement is that about the time the bandstand was completed, well off to one side, the palm proceeded to die. And nothing could persuade the natives that this was not the engineer's fault. To the simpler

folk of Jeremie, his very suggestion of moving that palm had antagonized the spirits.

Superstition thrived even in enlightened Jeremie. Native workmen, digging a sewer, and coming upon the bones of an unmarked grave, would hastily throw down their tools and scatter in all directions, and nothing could persuade them to resume work. Nor were the devils in Haiti confined to tombs; they dwelt also in trees and rocks and all inanimate things of nature. Back at Cayes, the engineer, in trying to straighten a highway, had come upon one shelf of mountain which defied his hand-drills. Its resistance proved conclusively to the Haitians that it was the abode of some evil demon, and they refused to touch it. The engineer thereupon imported steam-drills, tunnelled it, and blew it up with dynamite.

"Yes," admitted the natives; "you destroyed it this time, but it will grow again, and it will grow to be twice as large and three times as hard as it was before."

In Emelie's place, we finished our cocktail and called for the check.

"Yas, my dear," said Emelie. She was proud of her English, and had listened in to our conversation. "You talk bad spirits? *My* spirits always good spirits! Come again, Harry."

v

It was later that we found another superstition, this time among the servants at the Colonel's home.

The little maid who waited upon the table—prompted by inquiries from the Colonel's son, who had acquired rare proficiency with the dialect—talked very seriously and earnestly of the *zombis*, mysterious sirens of the Lorelei type, who lure men to destruction.

"And you believe in them, Marie?"

The girl appeared surprised at such doubt.

"Of course, I believe. Every one knows that there are *zombis*. One sees them everywhere. They walk through the woods, and smile upon the coffee pickers. And there are others, in the sea, who sit upon the rocks and comb their hair. The fishermen can never resist them. But those who follow them always disappear. No one knows how. They just vanish."

"And have you seen them yourself, Marie?"

"Yes." She tried to make it very positive and convincing. "I have seen all sorts of *zombis*. Most of them are black. But some are fair, like American girls, with golden hair. And always they are beautiful, very beautiful. You, too, will see them, if you look. But when you do, run away. Do not follow them. If you do, you will never come back."

Lafcadio Hearn had described much similar *zombis* as existing in the legends of Martinique. Their source undoubtedly was the same, from some bit of African folklore that had come over with the slaves. Or had they originated in these two islands from some old French fairy tale? There was always so much that one must leave unfathomed in this Haiti. One came upon strange beliefs,

and strange customs, founded upon the traditions of the centuries, which no one could explain.

VI

There were the wedding ceremonies.

These did not transpire frequently, for marriage here was largely a luxury for those of some wealth or social standing, and as in most southern countries the general run of peasants got along quite nicely without benefit of clergy.

Few of the Haitians could afford the expense of priest-hire, and some undoubtedly disliked the tantalizing delay upon which the church insisted. It was the law here—civil as well as ecclesiastical—that prospective brides and grooms must have their bans published from the altar on three successive Sundays before their nuptials could be officially consummated. Even the American officers in the republic found themselves subject to this regulation, regardless of their faith. One lieutenant of my acquaintance, sending home for his fiancée, did manage to circumvent it, but only by going direct to the president himself, who made a special dispensation to the effect that the bans might be said in *three* churches on *one* Sunday.

As a result of all these obstacles, the natives usually followed the path of least resistance. The ties, to them, were a bother, anyhow, making it harder for an aggrieved husband to leave a wife who developed nagging propensities, or vice versa. And in a country where so

many of the neighbors were in the same class, an informal union carried no disgrace.

To what extent they remained faithful in such unions was a matter for debate. That some changed partners when the fancy moved them was undeniable. One met girls who, when asked as to the paternity of their babies, answered very frankly and casually that they had not the slightest idea. In such cases a child merely took his mother's name, and it seemed to serve him quite as well as a father's. And there were few peasant girls above the age of maturity on whose virtue one might care to gamble, unless one received heavy odds.

These conditions, however, were no worse than those in most tropical lands, and I think better than in some. At least, mating here seemed to be far less of a Paul Jones or Nantucket-dance than in Guadeloupe, and I never saw the entire population of a Haitian city out parading at night in search of transient *amours*, as in Basse Terre.

Many of the mated couples, I was assured, lived together throughout their lives, and the majority seemed quite faithful during the time that they *did* share the same roof.

There were even some Haitains, in fact, who were faithful to *several* wives. This happened most frequently about the Cayes district, where so many of the men emigrated to Cuba and often stayed there for indefinite periods, leaving at home an overwhelming preponderance of women. At times there one would pass a group of

three or four houses, the homes of a select party of ladies who collaborated quite amicably in entertaining one gentleman. Such polygamy—I do not think it was frequent—was always honest and above-board, with no deception involved, and the ladies appeared quite satisfied with their lot. They fortunately were not dependent on that one lone negro for support; it was really the girls who, as marketers, usually held the family purse-strings here; and considering the keenness of feminine competition, they probably felt themselves fairly fortunate in holding even a quarter interest in the attentions of a man.

Yet the very fact that a regular marriage, with bans and priest and everything, was the exception rather than the rule, tended to give greater distinction to those who *did* undergo a ceremony. And such as splurged on this highly fashionable luxury, made considerable noise about it.

One marriage which I attended was preceded by an all-night feast, not altogether dissimilar to the wake before a funeral, though marked by greater decorum. As refreshment followed refreshment, the guests took turns in making speeches, mostly by way of advice to the dusky groom, spouting for hours on the responsibilities of marriage and the sanctity of the home.

Sitting in an obscure corner with my American friends—we were invited by the bride's father, an employee of the *Travaux Publiques*—I wondered how perfectly the orators lived up in private life to the sentiments they expressed. But their eloquence was beyond criticism:

"You have taken a bird from her feathered nest," said one of the speakers dramatically, waving toward the ramshackle house where the bird and her family lived. "Will you rear and protect her gently? Will you come and bring her sustenance as a mother feeds her chicks? Or will you, like a raging lion, regard her as your prey?"

The groom himself looked slightly bored, but the orator soared on. One after another, in similar vein, poured out his wisdom on the subject, until the few Americans invited were forced to flee for air. But to the Haitians, in their inordinate love of talk, it was a grand and glorious occasion.

In due time the local judge showed up, a dusky but dignified gentleman in a solemn full-dress suit, to perform the civil rites. Then followed a drive to the church, which required the use of every hack in town, with many guests on foot. Invited or uninvited, the entire population of the city poured into the pews. The bride, although she was as black as coal, wore yards of snow-white lace. The ceremony was chanted, and came to its conclusion with the loud and frantic ringing of every bell in the church tower. But this did not end the racket. Untired apparently after twelve hours of feasting and celebration, the company packed itself into carriages again, and—led by a trio of native drummers—went riding around and around the streets in a grand parade.

No one in town could remain unaware that the couple had had a wedding!

VII

It was in the funerals, however, that one saw the queerest Haitian custom, and sometimes the grossest superstition.

Not, of course, in the "high class" funerals, where the aristocrats hired a modern hearse and buried their dead in style, but among the peasants, to whom a death meant an all-night wake, and a drunken orgy, and a staggering march to the grave.

I was strolling one evening about the streets of Jeremie, when I chanced—just outside the hospital—upon a silent mob consisting mostly of women. Some patient within had apparently died, and they were waiting for the corpse. As the door of the hospital opened, one aged hag let out a piercing wail. It was the signal for an answering chant from the rest—all of whom, as "professional mourners," had been hired for the occasion.

Wailing and chanting they escorted the deceased to the home of his family, where the real celebration began. Or, it *seemed* a celebration. By Haitian law, since bodies won't keep particularly well in the tropics, it is strictly required that all who die must be buried in twenty-four hours. For about twenty-two the "mourners" in this case wailed and wept until the welkin rang; the neighborhood resounded with the revelry of the wakers; and above it all echoed the throb of the drums, which follow the Haitian through his life from the cradle to the grave.

[There was nothing dismal or depressing about a Haitian

funeral. Every one, in fact, seemed to have a good time, except possibly the corpse. And even *he* was the recipient of a generous hospitality. It was the custom always to treat the deceased as though he were still alive. Usually he was propped up in the center of the gathering, clad in his Sunday garments, with a pipe stuck into his mouth, and the mourners would address him—sometimes solemnly, sometimes facetiously—as though he were yet an active guest.

“Want another cig, pop?”

On this particular occasion, the daughter sat beside the stiff, conversing seriously.

“See, papa? Here come even a couple of *blancs* to say goodbye to you.”

Eventually they packed the deceased into his narrow coffin. For some obscure reason, a casket in Haiti is seldom more than a foot or so in width. Whether this represents economy where timber is rather expensive, or is dictated by the fact that the average native cemetery is always overcrowded, I could never ascertain. But though the caskets are of peculiar shape, with a bulge to accommodate the shoulders, it must be rather a problem to get a big fellow in, and one could easily imagine the mourners being called upon to sit on the lid, much as though closing a trunk.

In this particular case, they evidently succeeded. Whereupon the party, numbering about a hundred now and pepped up by the rum, set out for the cemetery in a hilarious mob, led by two men who carried the coffin upon their heads. They, like the female mourners, were

professionals at the game, and their business was to dance. Followed by a chanting, laughing mob, they cavorted down the road, pausing at every corner to indulge in somewhat more intricate steps, and whirling frantically around in a circle to fool the local spirits. It was the same identical performance I had witnessed up in the mountains, when the natives were burying Judas!

"The crossroads are particularly infested with spirits," it was explained. "They turn around and around there with the casket, so the devils will be thrown off the track, and won't know which path they're taking."

At one corner they performed too violently. The coffin toppled, and fell with a crash, and the deceased came rolling out. But the crowd, far from being horrified, shrieked with maudlin glee! Women rushed upon the scene, rolled the body back, and clamped down the lid again. Two other men took over the jobs of the pallbearers. And the cortége went dancing on.

VIII

Queer rites, these, in a land where the church held so much influence!

For Haiti, in many respects, was most devoutly Catholic. Nowhere have I seen the rapt ecstasy I saw in the faces of the old women as they knelt before the altars of Haitian churches.

And reverting back to my first day in Jeremie, every man, woman, and child turned out to walk in the Easter processional. It was led by several altar boys. Then came

the priest—like most priests in Haiti a white Frenchman—gorgeous in his robes. Then the children from the Catholic schools. There was a Brothers' School here, with four hundred boys enrolled, and a Sisters' School, with three hundred girls, all in dark blue dresses, but with sashes criss-crossing from shoulder to hips, the ribbons indicating their class or grade—white, yellow, red, green—and giving the groups a pleasingly gay touch of color. Then the rest of the population, in close-packed mob.

I stood on the curb with the Colonel's son, watching as they issued from the cathedral, and slowly circled around and around the little plaza before it. And the old priest, as he passed us, made the sign of the cross in our direction! Infidels that we were, we couldn't be certain whether he meant it for *us* or not. But some of the servants from the Colonel's household, marching in the ranks, saw it and were sure that he had bestowed upon us some special blessing.

Marie, the little maid who believed so earnestly in *zombis*, came to us that evening. Would we pass on the blessing to her? And to the rest of the kitchen force?

We demurred.

"But we're not good Catholics!" we protested.

"It does not matter," said Marie. "He blessed you. That makes you almost as good. And we want you to bless *us*."

So we both went down to the kitchen. The servants all stood in a row, beaming expectantly. And with such solemnity as we could achieve, we went dutifully up and down the line, blessing the entire household.

CHAPTER XVI
TO CHRISTOPHE'S CITADEL

I

IN Haiti I had expected to find only one acquaintance from long-past college days.

Instead, it developed that there were three here, all engineers, who by sheer coincidence had gravitated toward the Black Republic. And when, returning by coffee-boat to Port-au-Prince, I promptly looked them up, it was to discover that one of them was setting out on a motor trip to the North Coast.

"There'll be only my wife and a small party," he invited; "that leaves room for one more."

Wherefore another morning found us headed for Cape Haitien, scene of the early slave rebellions, and the home of Christophe, the negro monarch who built upon an isolated mountain peak the mightiest citadel in the New World. It was Haiti's most famous show-place.

II

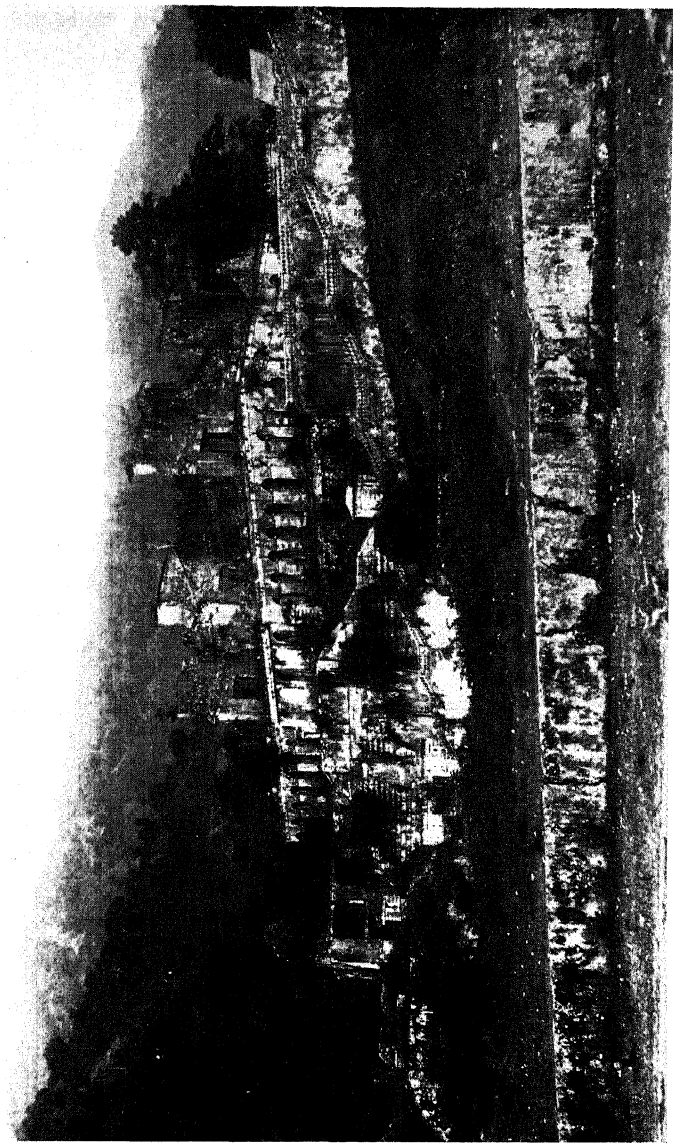
The road we followed on this occasion was the most-travelled highway in the republic, but our automobile created as much excitement and terror as on the road to Cayes.

There was *one* notably unperturbed individual who stood his ground, carefully allowing us to miss him by a single inch, but he was most exceptional.

"You don't see it often," explained John, "but he's catering to another funny superstition. He's got the notion, for some reason or other, that the spirits are after him, so he edges as close to us as he dares. He probably is rejoicing now in the hope that we killed a few devils."

That it happened to be a Saturday—the inevitable market-day—made traffic heavier than usual.

Regiments of women with bundles on their heads and squadrons of donkeys filled our path as far as one could see ahead. The whole road became a shambles of dismounting riders and tugging drivers. Yet even here in northern Haiti—where negroes were supposed to be particularly independent, and far less mild in disposition than those of the south—the peasants manifested no violent ill-will. The most startled would eventually join in the laughter which greeted their chicken-like antics. A few of them, although mature enough in age, took a childish pleasure in racing with us, galloping before the machine for a hundred yards or more before they turned aside, grinning, to let us pass. There seemed no intentional hostility in the one group that shrieked at us and hurled banana peels. And even those whose bolting donkeys scattered baggage in the dust would often smile good-naturedly as they gathered up their foodstuffs, wiped off a portion of the dirt, and continued on to market.



"At Milot one found the first evidence of Christophe's greatness in the ruined palace of
Sans Souci"

III

As the stream of rustics thinned out, the trail held much less interest.

It followed the Gulf of Gonaives for a time, criss-crossing the brief stretch of narrow-gauge railway that led to St. Marc; the village of St. Marc itself slipped past, a quaint little city of dazzling white streets beside a glorious bay; then came desert, extending for many miles, the sheerest desert I had thus far seen in Haiti, relieved only by one far-from-luxuriant valley.

This was the valley of the Artibonite. Authorities proclaimed it potentially fertile, and irrigation projects were in contemplation, but for the moment—with its single river a mere brown trickle at the bottom of steep dry banks—it was one of Haiti's many Saharas.

"It should have been irrigated long ago," explained John. "The only difficulty was that until quite recently foreigners were forbidden to acquire land."

He gave the wheel a spin to avoid another party of donkey-tugging natives.

"From the days of the first rebellion, you know, Haiti has lived in constant dread of white invasion, and this has dictated every national policy. The peasants had no money to develop waste areas, and the government simply wouldn't let the outside capitalist do it. The *blancs* must not be given a foothold. When the constitution was finally changed, so that foreigners could buy property there was a great hullabaloo about it. Haiti, the anti-

American crowd charged, had been sold to the greedy capitalist."

Thus far the foreign promoter had taken little advantage. But a bill was pending at the moment, calling for the registration of all land titles—which were vague and muddled in a country whose peasants squatted wherever their fancy might dictate—and such registration was seen as a prelude to investments.

Haiti needed development. As a one-crop country, a single bad coffee-year could easily plunge it in serious financial depression. With deserts like this opened to the cultivation of cotton, hemp, pineapples, or sugar, it would be placed upon a much sounder economic basis. But there were many who saw in the project a scheme for robbing the native of his holdings and turning them over to the American profiteer.

"It's something that could happen, of course. And worthless as his land has been, the Haitian loves it. Only it isn't selling the property that worries Haiti so much. In an influx of capital, the anti-American sees the prospect of continued occupation. The more commercial interests Americans obtain here, the greater the likelihood of future interventions."

Before us the sea appeared again, shimmering over the reefs in a play of azure and amethyst. Then another white-plastered little town, the city of Gonaïves.

It was to this port that l'Ouverture had come for his conference with Leclerc, trusting to a white man's word of honor only to be treacherously seized and shipped

away to a distant French prison. And here it also was that his successor, Dessalines, had declared the independence of the Black Republic on January 1, 1804.

Today the old city appeared to be fast asleep. The sun-drenched streets were deserted, and the only sound came from a little schoolhouse in the drone of childish voices, reciting a lesson in chorus as is the fashion throughout Haiti.

“But it’s not unlikely that they’re reading the story of l’Ouverture or Dessalines or Henry Christophe. They’re naturally very proud of their heroes. The books, like school histories everywhere, emphasize the heroic qualities; they don’t emphasize the fact that Dessalines, as soon as he attained power, declared himself Emperor, and ruled about as tyrannically as the Frenchmen did. Past history has helped to foster a suspicion of the *blancs*. No wonder it’s been such an obsession with them to keep this a Black Republic.”

IV

For several hours more, beyond Gonaïves, we swirled on through a drought-stricken country.

Then came a range of rugged hills.

As the road ascended, circling their steep sides like a jerky, knotted string, gullies revealed themselves below us, luxuriant with hidden thickets of banana trees, and when at last the 3,000-foot crest was reached, an entirely new country lay before us.

This was the Plaisance Valley, one of the most fer-

tile and beautiful in Haiti. Before us the wooded hills rolled away to the distant Atlantic. To the northwest, lost in haze, lay the islet of Tortuga, from which the first French settlers had come. And as we went serpentin- ing down the northern slopes of the ridge, we passed many a relic of the Colonial era—the ruins of some ancient bridge—a patch of crumbled wall hidden in jungles of wild coffee—a venerable gate which opened once to some fine old French château—and at last, in mid-afternoon, a picturesque stone arch beyond which lay a city of heavy masonry and iron-grilled windows, the “City of Massacres” itself.

Cape Haitien, more familiarly known to Americans as “The Cape,” is rich in early history.

Not far distant, at the little fishing village of Petit Anse, is the site where Columbus landed in 1492 to establish the first fortress in the New World, and to leave behind him a small garrison whose extermination at the hands of the aboriginees was but a prelude to the many slaughters which were destined to follow here. In the city itself, one may see the Place d’Armes, where—during those stormy days when revolt was brewing—the Frenchmen broke negroes upon the wrack or burned their leaders alive. On the waterfront, an ancient house is pointed out as the home in which Pauline, the wife of Leclerc, waited while her husband waged a hopeless warfare to stem the maddened black armies which poured down from the hills. And throughout the town itself one comes upon the ruins of old, old mansions, from which the ex-

slaves, crazed with victory and power, dragged out the hated *blancs* and wreaked a final vengeance upon them.

Yet these relics of the past were somewhat lost to-day in the Cape Haitien of the present. Earthquakes had shaken most of them to heaps of brick, and new dwellings had sprung up to replace them—not flimsy wooden huts, like those of Port-au-Prince, but solid and substantial structures of stone and mortar, their fronts painted in many contrasting tints, as in Latin American cities. A big new cathedral now hid the remnants of the old. The Place d'Armes was bright with bushes of vari-colored croton. And from a motion picture theater beside the cathedral, the welkin rang with the shouts of the present-day black hordes—shouts which at times suggested another massacre, but which turned suddenly to crazy laughter when the comedies were shown.

The local District Engineer put us up at his house upon the historic plaza; there was a tea-party at the Consulate, in a garden hung with Japanese lanterns; a seven-course dinner; and a formal dance at the club, with naval officers in their tropical white uniforms and ladies in evening dress.

V

So to Christophe's citadel.

One could see it from several vantage-points about Cape Haitien—a squat old tower upon a far-off mountain peak, dwarfed by distance and deceiving. The Americans here made frequent pilgrimage to it, and on

Sunday morning there were half a dozen of us who set out in early morning for Milot, where the bridle trail began.

Milot itself, reached by an hour's auto drive from the Cape, was a straggling village of thatched houses, but here one found the first evidence of Christophe's splendor in the palace of Sans Souci.

Old Christophe had followed closely in the footsteps of Dessalines.

Like his predecessor, he had not been content with the title of "president." It was no fit office for a burly negro who stood six feet or more in his army boots, and at whose command all lesser darkies trembled. He promoted himself to "King," and took the name of "Henry I." Some say that His Majesty, who was quite without education, found "Henry" easier to write than the name his mother had given him. But whatever he might lack in schooling, Christophe made up for in authority and force, and he was also a man of imagination. Must a nation have money? Christophe promptly collected the gourds, which served as drinking vessels, and made them a medium of exchange; today, you will note, the local bills are still described as *gourdes*. And must a king have courtiers? He immediately created an arbitrary nobility of three princes, eight dukes, twenty counts, forty barons, as well as a few of everything else found in the courts of Europe, and here in Sans Souci they maintained a pomp and an intricacy of regal fashion and

formality which Europe itself, even in those early days, could never have equalled.

His palace, too, was one quite fit for royalty. In fact, Christophe is said to have had many residences in Haiti—some estimates place the number at twenty-one—but this at Milot was by far the most magnificent. A brook was diverted from its course to flow beneath Sans Souci and cool the air. The floors were all of marble. The walls were panelled in hard-wood, and hung with the finest tapestries and paintings procurable. There were audience chambers, and banquet halls galore, and suites for the royal family, and although His Majesty could not read a single word, he collected an extensive library.

Today, of course, the glory had departed. A series of crumbling gate-posts opened upon a spacious courtyard, from which great staircases circled upward to a succession of terraces, backed by many arches and pillars that once led to velvet-hung throne-rooms. But the velvet had long ago disappeared, and the roofs had fallen, exposing the open sky, and from the debris of past grandeur the trees and creepers were sprouting.

"Just an empty shell," apologized those who had been here before. "But wait 'til you see the citadel."

VI

At Milot an obliging *gendarmerie* sergeant scoured the countryside to hire some horses for us.

The charge which their owners made—equivalent to

about \$1.20 for the day—appeared ridiculously small, but so also did the horses. Furthermore, in addition to their diminutive stature, they were painfully and pitifully thin. The Haitian, devotee as he is of cock-fights, has little consideration for any animal. In Port-au-Prince I had often pitied the poor little beasts which plodded patiently up-hill all day in the traces of public hacks; they would often falter and stop, and sometimes go to sleep in the middle of a journey; yet they were all on duty in early morning and their bells tinkled late into the night. It was evident that the rustic native, with little cash for his own *manger*, did not make a practice of over-feeding his livestock.

One actually felt sorry to mount such creatures, and once on board, felt even sorrier. They seemed to divine the long ascent that lay before them, and showed surprising spunk in refusing the citadel-trail. Even when we finally succeeded in starting them toward the right destination, although they barely moved along the path, they would suddenly express their sentiments by turning cart-wheels, and they maneuvered constantly for positions which might enable them to lash out unexpectedly at one another to the general discomfiture of our cavalcade.

Then there were the snakes, which seemed most abundant here. They were harmless little things, but most vividly green, and exceedingly active. Curled in palm trees, they would dart out inquisitive heads as we passed, and then would go flitting through the jungle before us

in a series of swift emerald loops that set the little horses to rearing and pitching.

The several young darkie lads who escorted us on foot, eager to earn a few pennies by carrying our lunch, refused to touch the serpents.

"*Non, non, non!*" they shrieked, when we would persuade them to catch one for us.

Was it the result of past superstition? These little green snakes had been sacred to the priests of the voodoo cult. But this, like many another question, was destined to remain unanswered. At the moment the tiny horses required all of a rider's attention, for when one was not restraining them from prancing, one was constantly prodding them from a noon-day nap.

Our plodding and sometimes precarious way led through magnificent forests, however, with frequent retrospects of the verdant countryside, and when, at the end of several hours' constant climb, the citadel itself confronted us, one felt that the effort was justified.

"Look!"

It stood upon the mountain peak, glimpsed far above the tree-tops, hundreds of feet above the zig-zag trail, its massive battlements outlined in ominous silhouette against a meek blue sky. Despite all warnings, one felt astonished to see it. Plodding up a trail which one knew was built to reach it, one still sat back in the saddle with a sense of personal discovery. It stood so completely alone there in the wilderness, miles and miles from everywhere; its very isolation added to its majesty; one felt

that to proceed, to intrude upon its silence, was akin to sacrilege.

How the early Haitians had ever succeeded in bringing up the stones wherewith they built it will always remain a mystery. Only fear could have given them the strength to struggle up these steep jungle-trails with giant rocks and massive cannon—the fear primarily of returning French armies, and a greater fear of the brutal Christophe himself. Of his very inspiring methods, many a tale is told.

One day, so a favorite story has it, he came upon a host of his men toiling vainly to move a heavy gun.

"It is too much for us!" they protested. "We are not enough."

Remorselessly His Majesty formed them into ranks, and with his own pistol shot down every third soldier.

"Let this example give you strength," he said, "or I will shoot down every second man."

That huge cannon continued up the hill.

One hears other stories, also, of a secret passageway—shorter and possibly smoother than the present path—which led up underground from Milot. It is mainly a rumor. But there were many passageways beneath the citadel itself, in some of which Christophe is supposed to have buried vast fortunes in gold and silver. Several searchers, notably a *gendarmier* officer, have explored the tunnels in vain, however, and if the treasure is there, its secret has probably died with Christopher. For once

his great fortress was built, it is said, he killed the workmen who knew.

The last to die was Besse, the mulatto engineer whose genius devised the great fortress. He stood one day with Christophe atop the loftiest parapet of the citadel.

"Only we two now know the secrets, do we not?" asked His Majesty.

"Only we two," agreed Besse.

"Excellent," said Christophe, and he pushed Besse from the tower. "Now only *I* shall know."

VII

We zigzagged up the last steep mile to a cliff-bordered terrace, where the mighty walls began.

In general form the castle was rectangular, though with one huge wedge-shaped bastion jutting from its corner to conform with the vagaries of the terrain.

Only at the entrance gate was there a patch of level ground beside the ramparts. Elsewhere they rose abruptly from the edge of the cliffs, which thus not only accentuated their five-story height but themselves became natural fortifications, so that in places the citadel loomed from below as a lofty sky-scraper, hundreds of feet above the deeper valleys.

The gate which opened upon the terrace was small and narrow, permitting only one person at a time to enter the dark and dismal "reception room" whose walls were loop-holed for a rifle volley. A musty smell per-

vaded the place, and one heard the drip of water. Groping through its dim twilight, one looked down into steep, half-flooded pits, which led to the secret passageways, or to gloomy dungeons so narrow that Christophe's prisoners had been forced to stand upright until they died from sheer exhaustion.

It was a relief to find the stairway and to ascend from this region of whirring bats. The steps, worn almost to brick-dust, brought one to a series of long corridors lined with arched gun-embrasures, through which the sunshine poured benevolently upon the rows of ancient cannon. The wooden gun-carriages had mostly rotted and fallen, mahogany though they were, tilting the pieces at drunken angles. Rust covered the iron of the cannon themselves, cracking off in huge chunks and scattering dust upon the solid brick floors to color them as with blood. Yet what a battery this must have been in the old days—three hundred huge naval guns of the largest calibre known to the Eighteenth Century—peering out from this eminence to command countless miles of wilderness! And everywhere about them, in great pyramids and disordered heaps, were cannonballs sufficient to keep these cannon belching destruction through a siege of many weeks.

Another ascent brought us to an open central court now overgrown with jungle. The steps which led therefrom to other batteries and ramparts were gardened with fern and lichen. Vines and giant trees grew in the crevices of the surrounding walls, often far above the

soil, to which they dropped festoons of air-roots. Weeds, impenetrable and taller than one's head, filled the yard itself, almost obliterating the square central tomb in which Christophe himself had finally been buried.

In a few spots, patches of wall had fallen, yet as a whole this fortress was remarkably well preserved, and the more one examined it, the more one marvelled. Here were arches without a keystone, each brick symmetrically narrower at the bottom than at the top. The stairways were often artistic in design, yet also most practical, with loop-holes opening upon them from unexpected angles so that the enemy, were he to gain access to the stronghold, would still find many a surprise awaiting him within. Nothing of military value had been overlooked. There were bake-shops and arsenals and a hospital. The tops of the walls had been designed to catch the rain and spill it into huge storage vats below. There were even chutes opening from what must have been the galley, for the disposal of the garrison's refuse.

Yet neither had beauty been ignored. There was nothing formal about the architecture. No two towers were ever quite alike, but they balanced and harmonized superbly. The artist in our party lamented her failure to bring a sketch-book. The others exclaimed, "What a perfect setting for a great motion picture!" I could myself think of no comment that could do this castle justice. Here in the solitude of the Haitian jungle was a monument with the massiveness of Gibraltar, the isolation of Llasa, and the beauty of Melrose Abbey.

And the view from the topmost tower! There are three outstanding sights in the world—that from the top of Sugar Loaf, in Rio de Janeiro—that from the tip of the famous Peak, across the harbor of Hong Kong—and that from the walls of the Citadel, in the wilderness of Haiti!

It was truly sublime, for one looked down upon a vast world of jumbled mountains. Scattered among the hollows the infrequent huts of native squatters peeped from the forest, an occasional roof of corrugated iron gleaming like a sheet of silver beneath the noon-day sun. Overhead a fleet of black clouds moved slowly across the heavens, and down below their shadows drifted in great dark splotches across the bright green wilderness.

Sunlight—shadows—sunlight—shadows.

The procession seemed to symbolize the story of Haiti. Long days of slavery under the French. Revolt. A declaration of independence that merely brought sterner masters—the Emperor Dessalines and King Henry Christophe the First.

Old Toussaint l'Ouverture, had he survived, might have proved an able ruler.

But Dessalines was an ignorant black, squat and ugly and savage. As warrior, he was eminent; as president, he was puzzled.

“His secretaries began to bring him papers,” writes Vandercook in his excellent yarn, *Black Majesty*. “All day long they gave him not a moment’s peace. ‘What, Jean Jacques, shall we do about foreign trade? About

export duties? Land deeds? Jurisprudence? With what shall we pay the army?" "

It was all so bewildering!

He lacked the genius of Henry Christophe, who followed him to fame. When he declared himself an emperor, he created no other royalty. "There's only one man who is royal here," was the verdict he gave out; "that's Jean Jacques Dessalines." And what of the problems of state? He imported some mincing French dancing masters, and practised the minuet! He became a national laughing-stock, and was murdered by his soldiers.

Christophe was more competent, but also more wickedly cruel. Even in the days of the French occupation, the few independent blacks who owned slaves of their own were notoriously harsh, far harsher indeed than any white in the treatment of their subjects. Haitians have always been notedly cruel in their dealing with other Haitians. The worst of them all was Henry the First, in his building of this fortress. Their deaths were so utterly useless and vain, for no one ever attacked it. Yet it stood here as a colossal monument to Haiti's dread of white domination, and its willingness to suffer anything for the sake of a fancied freedom.

One dared not look too directly down from its lofty parapets, unless one stretched out flat upon the walls. One thought too keenly of Besse, or of many another who had hurtled over the edge into that abyss a thousand feet below.

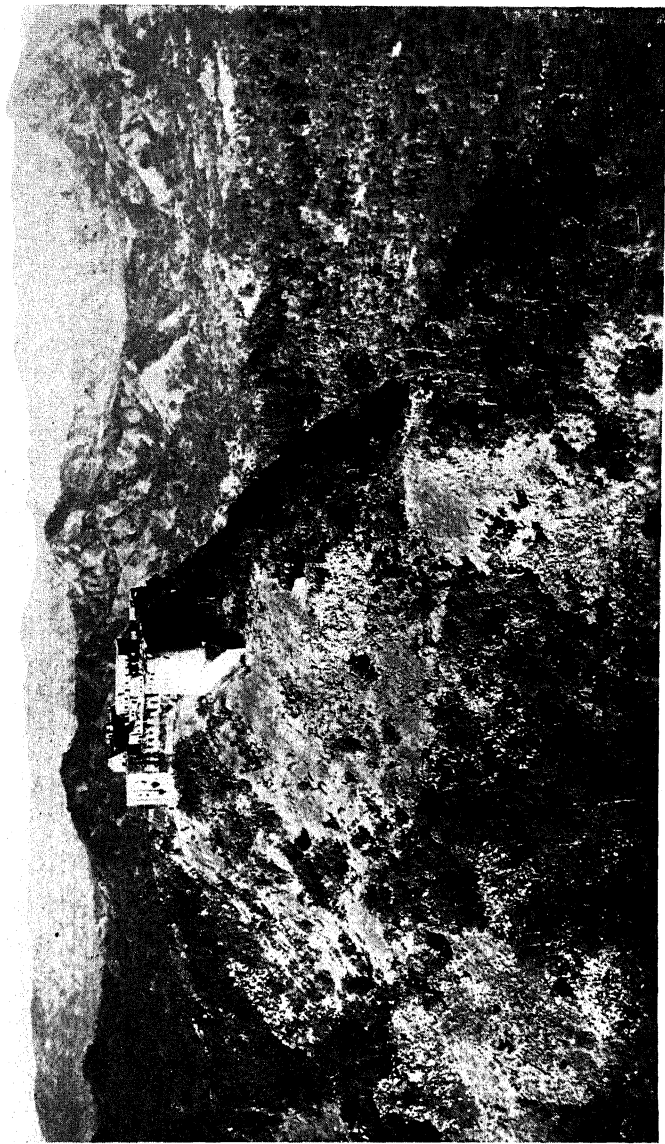
As we sat up there, our *gendarme* came to tell us that one of our horses had fallen. The little native boys, amusing themselves in our absence by stoning our tethered mounts, had driven one of the beasts so frantic that she broke her halter and leaped clean over the cliff. She lay dead, said the *gendarme*, exactly where she had landed. That had been merely a tumble from a terrace at the foot of the wall, and Christophe had shoved men from the top!

A whimsical character, old Christophe! Tradition has it that he had prepared himself for the revolution which he knew would eventually overthrow him. He had no fear of it. But one day, robust giant though he was, he suddenly collapsed. The news spread that His Majesty had suffered a stroke. Enemies materialized everywhere; men who had dared not face him before swarmed into the ranks of rebellious armies, and marched upon the palace. Old Christophe gave instructions for the escape of his family. Then, dramatic to the very last, he loaded his pistol with a bullet of pure gold which he had saved for such an emergency, and calmly shot himself.

VIII

We rode back in silence to Milot, where the motor car was waiting.

On the way to Cape Haitian we upset another few dozen donkey-trains and put the peasants to flight, and as always they were good natured. But in the city's old Place d'Armes the aristocrats were all out now for their



"It stood so completely alone in the wilderness; its very isolation added to its majesty; one felt that to intrude was sacrilege."

Sunday evening promenade, strolling sedately around and around the plaza in the manner of the Spanish *paseo*, and from them one caught an occasional glare that bespoke a deep hostility.

Just a brief flash of hate as one passed, yet nothing could be more eloquent. It came from the soul of him whose fathers had given their lives to drive out the hated *blanc*, and had labored up steep mountain trails beneath huge cannon to keep this Haiti black, and had lived for over a century in dread and distrust of all whites. And now picnic parties of whites went up to eat lunch on Christophe's tomb!

CHAPTER XVII

POLITICS IN PORT-AU-PRINCE

I

THROUGHOUT my rambles in Haiti, I had met few of the upper-class Haitians.

As the guest of American officers, one seldom came in contact with them, while in the hills one encountered only the peasants. Wherefore, upon my return to Port-au-Prince, with only another fortnight to spend in the Black Republic, I stopped with a Haitian family which maintained a small, select *pension*, situated on the slopes of the hill above the Champ de Mars, upon a street which might be described as one of fallen grandeur.

It was bordered by a quaint jumble of those old *cha-teaux* which one finds throughout Haiti, fantastic in their wealth of cupolas and balconies and other top-heavy ornaments held up by the flimsiest of rotting columns and pillars. Some of them abutted upon the very edge of the road; others stood far back behind extremely formal gardens. A few showed some evidence of fairly recent paint, and their driveways were lined with gleaming sea-shells; the majority were shabby and weatherbeaten, and their flower-beds had overgrown the old dry fountains and pieces of mildewed statuary which embellished

every courtyard. Yet Nature had done much to counteract their ugliness, enveloping them with masses of bougainvillea. Palms lined the street itself. And in my own little *pension*, frangipani and hibiscus grew luxuriantly along the edge of the wide porch which served as living room and dining room, and all about were cotton bushes, covered with little white tufts, like the bits of artificial snow one pins on Christmas trees.

It was a quiet, pleasant place; one was far more apt to meet the educated Haitian there than in one of the big American-patronized hotels; and I hoped to learn something of the native aristocrat's views on the American Occupation.

II

The family which operated the *pension* represented three generations.

There was Grandma, who had come out from Europe sixty years ago as the bride of a Haitian statesman. She was a very sweet and kindly old soul; she seemed fearful of outliving her usefulness; and she was constantly on duty, looking after the welfare of the guests. It was always she who locked the doors at night, and she also whom one first met in the morning.

"When one is ninety, it is hard to sleep," she would say regretfully. "You want breakfast? Eggs, yes, like Americans eat? Fruit; coffee?"

Her daughter, of middle age, showed the barest trace of Haitian ancestry, in a darkness of complexion and a

kinkiness of hair. She was the real owner of the house, but left much to grandma while she herself looked after the keeping of accounts and the preparation of those extremely detailed bills which seem the delight of landladies wherever the French influence has penetrated.

Grand-daughter, aged twenty but so tiny that one took her for fifteen, was usually engaged with her needle, making pretty little frocks for herself. Demure and doll-like, with creamy white complexion, she would have passed anywhere as a mademoiselle direct from Paris. It was only when I played ragtime on the piano—a battered old relic with yellow keys, which stood in the narrow hallway—that she betrayed the spirit of the country. Then, with a quick flare of unrestrained joy, she would leap into the center of an applauding group, and fling herself with the wildest abandon into the intricacies of the Charleston and the Black Bottom, with variations and improvisations of her own.

But this was merely an occasional impulse. These folk were no drum-beating, cock-fighting, *bambache*-attending voodoo devotees from the hills. They stand out in my memory as among the kindest, and pleasantest, and most gracious people I have known. Yet they always spoke of themselves with a very real pride as Haitians.

III

The guests, except for myself and a German coffee-buyer, were also citizens of the Republic, and might be classified as *colored* men.

In Haiti, and for that matter throughout the West Indies, men are not merely white or black, for the mulattoes form a class between, and are quite particular about this nice distinction.

"I'm a *colored* man," more than one Haitian remarked to me, always with a faint emphasis upon the adjective. As a rule, the speech was prompted by a desire to show that the speaker was not ashamed of his negro blood; yet in its tacit denial of being completely African, it struck me as betraying a pride in the white blood, too; and it attested to the fact that a slight color line existed even in the Black Republic. A full-blooded negro *might* rise here to high posts of influence and honor, and frequently he did, yet the upper social circles were always notably lighter than the lower. And these fellow guests of mine, mostly professional men and all of good family, were without exception mulattoes.

I found them very polite, and even friendly. If they felt toward me the hostility which they felt toward the forces of occupation, they gracefully concealed it. Yet I *was* aware of a peculiarly sensitive reticence on their part; they seemed eager to prove themselves agreeable, but vaguely hesitant. For some time their attitude puzzled me, until one day a trifling incident explained it.

There was a physician among them, locally quite distinguished, who had sought to engage me in French on some subject quite beyond my command of the language, and had smilingly concluded that I understood none of it at all. Some time later at the table, I chanced to use a

more simple phrase, to request that he pass me a certain dish. He started with surprise, and I saw a flush of anger suffusing his dark cheeks.

"So!" he exclaimed, his voice trembling. "Monsieur can not converse with a colored man except when he requires a favor?"

These Haitians, keenly aware of American race prejudice, were super-sensitive. There was one other guest at the house who threw further light upon the subject. He was one of the few who had gone to New York rather than to Paris for his education.

"I'm really in favor of the Occupation," this gentleman said to me. "Unlike most of my countrymen whose education or standing permits, I've never been interested in politics, and it is our politicians, of course, who object most strongly to your presence. I, as a merchant, dread what might follow the withdrawal of your Marines, as much as any foreigner in business.

"Before 1915, when you intervened, I was very young, but I remember many terrible scenes. I could tell you of the dismembered bodies that were carried through the streets—of the three men slain upon my father's doorstep, and so mangled that we could not identify one of them from another. Everything was bloodshed and revolution then. We Haitians enjoyed no credit. There was no trade. So I hope the occupation may continue.

"But *not*," he continued, emphatically, "*not* as it is now, so wounding to our pride. It is the Americans' personal attitude towards us which grieves the Haitian most.

Even the few officeholders whom you back, and whose lives are protected by your Marines, must secretly resent it. For the kindest of you, with your inherent color prejudice, look upon us as inferiors. It may be quite beyond your power to put entirely aside such prejudice. But when you come here, as you say you do, to help us establish a better government, your people might have the courtesy not to keep us so constantly aware of your feeling toward us.

"When your Marines first landed, there were many Haitians who, like myself, were glad to see them put an end to revolution. We opened our clubs to the officers, and invited them to our homes. Many of them accepted, *then*. Perhaps they had been instructed by higher authority to establish something of an *entente cordiale*. But that was before they brought their own wives and families, to form a self-sufficient colony of their own.

"It is really the American women who have humiliated us the most. At our functions, your officers asked our wives or daughters to dance, and never did they refuse. But were their womenfolk equally polite? From their arrival they shunned us. At one of the largest affairs ever given at our Haitian club, when the club's president offered his arm to an American lady, to escort her in to dinner, she deliberately refused it.

"I doubt that *many* of your women would have been guilty of such flagrant discourtesy. But we would not risk a repetition of that insult. Save in the highest official circles, where entertaining is a matter of international

etiquette, Haitians and Americans no longer mingle. It is *your* fault, not ours. Your people do not care to associate with us. Nor will *we* intrude upon those who despise us as niggers."

IV

As one continued on up the street upon which my pension was situated, one found that the dwellings improved. Their verandas offered finer views of the city and the bay; their gardens were larger and better kept; the houses themselves were more apt to be freshly painted.

It was here that the American colony dwelt, for a naval officer's salary was high, according to Haitian standards, and in the capital (as in the smaller cities) a Marine Corps lieutenant could hang his name-plate on the gateposts of a *chateau* rented from some former member of a Haitian cabinet.

It was a somewhat exclusive colony, in the manner of most army or navy posts, but a visitor with the *entrée* was assured of a heart-warming welcome and plenty of entertainment. Festivities here were by no means limited, as in the smaller towns where there were barely enough Americans to make up one table of bridge; there was an almost continuous and varied round of parties and dinners and dances.

To some of these a few outstandingly important Haitians were invited. To one musicale at Port-au-Prince, the president, at the moment M. Louis Borno, paid a brief visit. He required that a list of all the guests be

submitted to him a week in advance—one of his regular precautions against hobnobbing with potential assassins—but he came resplendently, accompanied by his entire staff, and conversed charmingly with the colony in fluent French, Spanish, or English. Verily the day was past when illiterate generals fought their way to the palace, and presided with comic pomp!

But at most such affairs, Haitians were conspicuously absent. The coming of the American women to the colony *had* made it socially self-sufficient, and—although I can scarcely imagine the women being deliberately rude, as my critic had charged—there was little mingling of the races.

"It's not just snobbishness," explained one officer. "I've friends among them for whom I hold a very high respect, but we have very little in common. Our cultures and our interests are entirely different. So are our languages and mental habits. Why should I chatter all night in imperfect French, or listen to them chatter imperfect English, on subjects which interest neither of us, when I can spend a more pleasant time with my own people? I can't see why they wouldn't have a better time with *their* crowd, just as I do with mine."

In some cases, particularly those of Southerners, I do not doubt that color prejudice entered into the matter, and in many cases the superiority complex, which is common to all Anglo-Saxons. But the super-sensitive Haitian impressed me as constantly on the look-out for slights, and over-ready to discover one where none was intended.

The local aristocrat had often been abroad as the diplomatic representative of past administrations, and had mingled with the world's statesmen. And here was a group of foreign officers—mere Lieutenants, and Captains, and Commanders, and Ensigns—who came to his own country and casually ignored him.

In his personal resentment, I think, one found the soil in which many another grievance took root and found nourishment. He brooded over his position. And like most men who feel themselves wronged, he was prepared to believe extravagant villainies of those who wronged him.

v

In Port-au-Prince the most articulate, if not the most violent, of anti-Americans were the newspaper editors.

The capital harbored about a dozen little one-page sheets—a surprising number in a community where only the few could read—and with the exception of the three to whom the Borno government paid \$50 a month for publishing official records—they were filled daily with the most scathing editorials against the Occupation, or against the Borno government whose overthrow the Occupation prevented.

It was my desire to meet a few of these editors, and I presently found an indisputable neutral who was glad to introduce me. He was a German by birth, but forty years' residence in Haiti had given him an effervescence quite unusual in a Teuton.

"Come on," he cried, gesticulating like a Frenchman,

"I have a carriage waiting. But tell not Borno I have introduced you to his enemies."

He drove to the home of one editor, an elderly gentleman of unimpeachable dignity, and a representative of the finest old Haitian aristocracy. His English proved more limited than my French, but the German did the talking.

"You see? This man is not a Bolshevik. Before the Occupation he was our Minister of Finance. But all Haitians are not crooks, as you Americans suppose. This fellow was honest—too damn honest. He could have swiped the whole treasury, and he didn't." He waved, in evidence, toward the neat but humble furnishings of the parlor. "Today he is almost penniless. Since the Occupation he is out of a job, and just publishing a newspaper. Come along, and I shall introduce you to some more."

Under the guidance of my effervescent friend, my round assumed the aspect of a personally conducted tour, but the editors invariably proved courteous; nearly all had held high office in the past; several spoke perfect English; and they often were bluntly frank, especially when they spoke of jail terms which past editorials had brought them.

To some of the lesser lights—who, in their attacks upon the government, often suggested naughty little boys with a new swearword and a piece of chalk—going to jail was very much a matter of pride. The naughtiest of them, Jolibois by name, was not in Haiti at the mo-

ment, but one heard many tales about him. It seemed to have been a hobby of his to walk across the Marines' parade ground at retreat, keeping his hat on while the troops presented arms to the "Star Spangled Banner."

"That's no flag of mine," he'd retort, if any one accosted him.

"And, of course, it wasn't," added the American officer who told me of it. "He just wanted us to beat him up, and make a martyr of him. You'll find that martyr complex among a great many of the editors."

Jolibois was in Cuba at the moment, resting on a record computed at fourteen terms, if my informants were correct. But he still attacked the Occupation from alien soil, and only a few months before my visit, eight other Haitian editors, for endorsing his writings, were all sent to jail together. The Government—this means the Haitian government and not the American administration—seldom held elaborate trials in such cases. The fact that the editors admitted authorship of articles which the Judiciary found seditious, made them immediately guilty of sedition. Why hold a public trial?

To me, this seemed a trifle raw.

"But look at the many Latin American republics," maintained the government official, "which do the same thing. And remember that in the older Haiti, before the Occupation, such editorials would probably have cost them more than imprisonment. It is the presence of the Americans which gives them courage to shout as they do."

Not all of those imprisoned regarded it as a lark.

There was Charles Moravia of *Le Temps*. He had once been minister to Washington in the old days. He was also a poet of no mean ability. He presided over an office more impressive than most, and he glanced up—a serious and keenly intelligent man—from a very busy desk.

"I have been four times in prison," he said, "and I have never faced a judge. I have spent one hundred and twenty days behind the bars within the past year. But I shall continue expressing my views, whatever may be the consequence."

Such men were earnest and sincere. They might be personally interested in politics, but although they belonged quite obviously to the "outs," they had no expectation of getting "in" by their editorials. One could not sweepingly dispose of them by calling them merely disgruntled politicians. When they talked, they developed an almost fanatical fervor that bespoke the suffering patriot, and which undoubtedly was genuine. The majority admitted that the Occupation had brought peace and some material benefit to Haiti, but they felt keenly the hurt of foreign domination; and sooner or later they would exclaim with Latin idealism: "You are caring for Haiti's body, but destroying Haiti's soul."

In many cases, these editors were brilliant men and gifted writers. Yet their hatred was so bitter and so blind that they charged their enemies with every conceivable crime, including murder. A striking example is that of an engineer whom I knew, who, during a certain pay-day in his district, was obliged for some reason

to suspend paying his men. His laborers buzzed and fumed about it, and other natives passing on the road paused to ask the cause of their excitement.

"Why," said the workmen, using a bit of *creole* slang, "the Lieutenant has killed the pay-roll."

The news travelled on down the road by way of the "bamboo telegraph," becoming more and more garbled and exaggerated with each retelling, as most news does. By the time it finally reached Port-au-Prince, it created a small sensation. And one of the local Haitian newspapers is said to have demanded an immediate prosecution of that American Lieutenant who, wantonly and in cold blood, shot down an unoffending native by the name of Perault!

While I was in the capital, I also met a number of the politicians who, belonging to the wrong party, had been out of office since the intervention.

It was never difficult to persuade them to talk. In fact, the main problem was to stop them, for when asked to state *their* specific grievances, they delivered fervent orations upon this, that, or the other thing.

One man broke into a two-hour discussion of such atrocities as the merry-go-round now operating on the Champ de Mars, and although I found it difficult to follow his argument, it appeared that the music kept citizens awake at night, and that the government was remiss in not suppressing it. This, of course, was an extreme case. The majority had more impressive complaints, most of which were too controversial in nature

to be enumerated in a book which started out to be a simple narrative of travel. Undoubtedly a fair proportion of them had a solid foundation in fact. But one could seldom hold the Haitian down to fact; given good ground for his take-off, he soared into oratorical space, and to him the pettiest grievance became the most heinous of crimes.

Sooner or later, however, nearly every man with whom I talked came back to two outstanding general complaints. Out of the welter of talk they loomed as the genuine, basic worries of the Haitian: 1. The intervention was humiliating to Haitian pride. 2. The Americans, or the Haitians whom their presence kept in power, held all the good political jobs.

VI

The Haitian who happened to *be* in office was usually more friendly toward the Occupation.

I recall one dear old judge at one of the towns in which I stopped, who had acquired quite a reputation for cultivating Americans. Whenever a visitor came to the colony, he would don his long black morning coat—a slightly worn but still dignified garment—and call to pay his respects or offer his services.

He took an almost boyish delight in showing me through his courts, over which he presided as Doyen, or Dean of Judges. He seldom sat on the bench himself nowadays, he explained, but was always there at 9 A. M. to see that the other fellows were on the job. And he kept

two judges for every bench, in case one of them missed a morning!

One could sense his pride in his little white-washed *Palais de Justice* as he led me upstairs to point out the two dozen law-books, and to exhibit the clerk, who became most animated over the papers on his desk when we appeared. Afterwards he conducted me downstairs again to a courtroom where a case was in session.

Our advent quite broke up the proceedings. The judge rose, bowed, and immediately descended for an introduction. As the Doyen explained the arrangements of the tribunal, he required only a long pointer in his hand to suggest a college professor lecturing on zoology. "That's the District Attorney up there; this lawyer on the platform in front of the bar is pleading; those fellows there are the other lawyers, waiting to be called."

Each of them, when indicated, rose and bowed in turn. There was quite a host of lawyers on hand, all in black robes like that of the judge, and they occupied a fenced inclosure of their own. There were no seats for visitors, but His Honor promptly dispatched an attendant across the road to borrow a camp-stool for me, whereafter he majestically ascended to his bench again, and the proceedings recommenced.

The lawyer pleading the case, who stood upon a high rostrum facing His Honor, must have been distracted by the fact that the Doyen continued to explain things to me, but neither he nor the presiding Justice was so impolite as to comment on the fact.



The tower that Christophe built still stands—A monument to the Haitian horror of the white man's domination

"This is what we call a Tribunal de Premier Instance. There's a magistrate's court beneath us, and a Court of Appeal in Port-au-Prince. For our criminal cases, we use a jury of twelve, as you do. For civil cases, only the judge, and the two lawyers."

This was a civil case, but even so, I marvelled at the absence of principals or witnesses.

"They never come, except in divorces," explained the Doyen, "and then only the one who sues."

Divorce was increasing in Haiti, he added. Twenty years ago it was completely unknown. Ten years ago his court might have two cases annually. Now, in this district alone, the number had jumped to twenty a year!

But this case was not a divorce, and exceedingly dull. The procedure here was for the lawyers to exchange their briefs, and to conduct a sort of written debate before they came to the trial. After reading their papers in court, they would turn in the manuscripts to the judge. All this oratory before the bar was more or less of a formality, and His Honor, knowing that he would later receive it in type, paid scant attention to it. Even the lawyer upon the rostrum—a rather handsome, clear-featured mulatto, with punctilious yet graceful court manners—appeared to be making little attempt to awaken the judge from his day-dreams. He merely read from a large law book, droning interminably, and the pile of similar volumes which he had before him promised a lengthy plea.

I whispered to the Doyen that I had another engagement. He winked most knowingly.

"I'll come with you," he said. "Those lawyers will talk all day. When *I'm* on the bench, I put my fingers in my ears."

We both rose. So did the entire court. We bowed deeply. The court bowed. Then we ducked.

Yet it must not be assumed, from the courtesy I found in this rural court, that Americans received special privileges when they came in contact with the law. Many maintained that in cases involving Americans and Haitians, the latter was usually favored. It was a sore point with the enlisted men of the Marine Corps that when natives abused them nowadays, they were unable to retaliate except verbally without incurring heavy penalties. And one case which came up some years ago through the murder of an American naval man was frequently mentioned.

It appears that the victim was at least partially to blame, for he had donned civilian garb in defiance of regulations, and had wandered into a most questionable part of the city. The details are obscured, but it also would appear that the Haitian gentleman who carved him up with a large knife, deserved *some* species of punishment. Instead, the court acquitted the native, and he was carried from the court-house on the shoulders of a cheering multitude of appreciative fellow citizens.

VII

In the final analysis, it must be admitted that the Occupation *was* humiliating to Haitian pride—as any occupation is bound to be—and that the Haitian aristocracy suffered both spiritually and financially therefrom.

After the fashion of tropical Latins, the white-collared gentlemen here had little flare for business, which was held in low esteem. Men of any education preferred a career in the parasitic professions—law or literature—while those of any real standing looked upon politics as the *only* suitable profession.

A rare few undoubtedly entered the last with an honest desire to serve their country. To the majority, however, a government office was a purely personal possession, their reward for possessing influence, and theirs to do with as they pleased. All Haiti, in fact, took it for granted that the main function of a government was to provide employment.

An engineer who recently discovered a method of work by which four of his men could perform a certain task previously requiring sixteen, was roundly criticized by the local Haitians. "Yes," they admitted; "it saves money, but what will the other twelve men do for a job?" Also illustrative of the local habit of mind is the Haitian director of the medical school, who was found marking as present several students who never attended his lectures. "I know they don't come," he explained, "but I

always mark them present; they're from very influential families."

Today a great many of the old grandees found their influence useless, and even for those who did belong to the right party there were few choice offices open. Except in the judiciary and the immediate presidential entourage, practically all the important departments were headed by Americans. Even Congress had been disbanded early in the period of Occupation, and although at this writing it is to be reconvened, it had afforded no plums for many years.

There were, of course, plenty of subordinate positions, but such berths were beneath the dignity of men who in the past had held cabinet portfolios. Pride of station began in Haiti with the lowly serving maid who refused to scrub a floor; nurses at the hospital expected assistants to perform their more menial tasks; and Haitian doctors refused to lower themselves by carrying their own instruments. Thus the former statesmen were very much out in the cold now, with no employment suitable to their station, and one could readily understand their feelings towards those who enjoyed the warmth within.

It was difficult to convince the Haitians, accustomed as they were to past methods of government, that the American officials were not taking advantage of their positions to enrich themselves. One of our early Financial Advisers, unfortunately, had given them some ground for complaint by drawing salary and expenses during a protracted absence from Haiti. He did it openly enough,

apparently without effort to deceive, but it left its regrettable stigma. Today the several departments went to ludicrous extremes in accounting for expenditures, publishing detailed reports which covered every postage stamp, mouse trap, or tooth pick used in service. But it failed to satisfy.

"All our money," said the Haitians, "is pouring out of the country in salaries to the Yankees who have been forced upon us."

The last was partially true. There were several civilians among the American treaty officials—i. e., officials nominated by Washington for employment under the Haitian government—who drew their entire salaries from the local treasury. The rest, who had come from the U. S. Navy or Marine Corps, drew a monthly bonus above their regular salaries, ranging from \$30 up to \$250 in the case of a few high officers, which in theory was to recompense them for the discomforts of life in Haiti. It was usually pointed out that since the U. S. Navy paid the bulk of these officers' stipends, Haiti acquired at a most decided bargain many highly qualified doctors, engineers, and similar specialists, whose services otherwise would have cost three times as much. This, however, was no cause for rejoicing to those who, regardless of their qualifications, coveted the jobs.

"Your American officials," said many a Haitian, "do nothing, absolutely nothing, which we could not do ourselves."

"Perhaps," retorted the officials, "but the fact re-

mains that they had over a hundred years in which to do it, and did nothing but loot the exchequer. For the wages *we* draw, Haiti receives some visible return."

But even the return brought comparatively little comfort to the aristocratic Haitian. He could not with dignity stand on line at a clinic, as did the peasants, to receive the medical treatment. And what good were roads, except to peddlers who went to market, or to American officials who went joy-riding about in cars provided by the government? The aristocrat could not afford a car.

One could feel sorry for him, even though it was *his* mismanagement of affairs in the past which had invited this intervention. The government which he had formerly regarded as his own special oyster was now tightly closed to him. He was all dressed up in pride and dignity, with nowhere else to go. In his comparative poverty, the old grandee had no recourse but to operate his châteaux as a *pension*, or retire to a more modest dwelling and rent his ancestral mansion to an American second lieutenant.

The *blancs* were caring for Haiti's body—the great mass of common people—and destroying *him*, its soul.

VIII

According to present plans, the Treaty Officials are to withdraw in 1936.

"But they won't go then!" feared many of the Haitians. "They're too happy here, living like lords and princes."

It seemed to me that they *did* live as well today as our representatives do in other foreign posts where they receive no bonus for discomfort. But except in Port-au-Prince, where a large colony made for entertainment, they were scarcely enjoying a riotously merry time. If one of them professed a desire to outstay his regular stint—it was three years, as a rule, for doctors, and four for engineers—his fellows were apt to look upon him almost with suspicion.

“He’s missed too many boats,” was a saying equivalent to, “Haiti’s made him a little queer.”

In every case that came under my observation, the American officer was eagerly enthusiastic about his work. He was very proud of the roads he was building where only muck-paths had existed, and of those hospitals where he treated patients who never had received treatment before. But in no case—excepting possibly that of the Marine sergeants who had been elevated to commissioned rank in the *Gendarmcrie*—did he look upon his job as a sinecure or welcome it for life. It was usually a pretty tough job, and one which brought little gratitude, except from the masses of the peasantry, who were too inarticulate to express thanks. He was usually looking forward rather eagerly to the day when he could start for home, with a record of achievement behind him. And whatever his critics may say, he’s leaving such a record.

CHAPTER XVIII

HISTORIC SANTO DOMINGO

I

HAITI was a most entertaining republic.

But there still remained a few places to be covered in that guidebook, and one of these was Santo Domingo, on the opposite side of the island.

A decade or so ago, there had been no trails or traffic from Port-au-Prince to that metropolis. One who attempted the overland journey was obliged to wallow over a jungle-path to the border, cross a wide lagoon on raft or small boat, and struggle on along a Dominican road no better than the Haitian.

Today one could make the hop in two hours by the planes of the West Indian Aerial Express. Or one could make it in a day's ride by motor car over an excellent new highway.

There was no lack of automobiles. When the news went out that I was contemplating the journey, a dozen dusky chauffeurs laid siege to me, camping at the gateway of my *pension* to waylay me with offers of passage. The fellow I finally selected, a Jamaican negro, borrowed five dollars on the night before starting, but he actually showed up at the appointed hour, with fuel in

his tank, and we drove away across the rolling hills, with distant vistas of Haiti's impossibly blue sea.

At the border a *gendarme* stopped us, and a black sergeant came out from his barracks to give us a casual glance. But he quickly passed us by; an attendant opened a swinging gate that barred the road; we were in the Dominican republic.

II

I had planned to walk the rest of the way, in order to see the Dominican republic more intimately.

So, dismissing my chauffeur, I swung my pack over my shoulders—the few other possessions which had not been pilfered by natives during my previous wanderings were to be shipped directly home—and set out for the one-time capital of Christopher Columbus.

The change was remarkable, for the two little nations which share this island have very little in common.

As one crossed the line, one noted a decrease in the density of the population. This Santo Domingo, although it covered two-thirds of the island, had only one-third as many citizens as the contiguous Black Republic. And although complexions were occasionally rather dark, the majority of those one met were predominantly Castilian. On the Dominican side, one found an "Aduana" instead of a "Duane"; the officer who put me through a polite third degree was unmistakably white; and the language now was Spanish, with no French understood.

"No, señor, no entiendo francés." He seemed to take

rather a pride in the fact, as though *francés*, the tongue of his despised negro neighbors, were something which he scorned to speak. "*Usted habla español?*"

He ransacked my baggage most thoroughly, but eventually he waved me on, and I swung off blithely along the road.

It was an unusually excellent road, too, a contrast to the native trails which I had traversed back in Haiti. Odd, it seemed, that so fine a road should be found in the oldest and most historic land in America. This was a land redolent with memories of the great explorer, and its early history centered about his name.

It was only a few years after Christopher first touched at Cape Haitien in the north, that his brother Bartholomew crossed the island to found the city of Santo Domingo. A few villages had already sprung up on the northern coast, and one tale has it that a Spanish refugee, fleeing across the island, mated with an Indian girl who sought to please him by revealing a gold mine, wherewith he returned to buy his pardon. At any rate, the *conquistadores*, who had known the precious metal to exist but had hitherto been unable to locate its source, moved across the island to these southern shores, and virtually enslaving the natives, forced them under pain of death to bring them further tribute. Santo Domingo thus became the first colony in America to send back treasure to Spain; it attracted the first hordes of avaricious adventurers; and within a few years it became a thriving city and a stronghold of Spanish influence.

From this capital Velasquez set out for Cuba; Cortez for Cuba and Mexico; Balboa for Panama and the Pacific; Pizarro for the conquest of Peru. For a time, in fact, all history seemed to have its center here. Columbus ruled as governor, and after him his brother, but they had their jealous enemies. Christopher, victim of intrigue, was for a time imprisoned in Santo Domingo, and later shipped home in chains, and even though he won back royal favor and was restored to the command of another fleet, the Dominican capital refused him entrée when he sought its shelter from a storm.

Santo Domingo's glory, however, was destined to prove brief. The island failed to produce in abundance the gold which Spain had hoped. With the growth of colonies elsewhere, and the discovery of vastly greater riches in Mexico, Panama, and Peru, it lost its preëminence. And Spain eventually sold this territory to France.

When the blacks of Haiti rose in revolt to banish their European masters, the status of the Dominican portion of the island became a matter of dispute. For a time it was independent; from 1822 until 1843 it fell under the rule of Haiti; in 1861 it voluntarily sought the authority of Spain; but in 1865 it finally and definitely declared its freedom and autonomy as the "Dominican Republic."

Hereafter its history, like Haiti's, is concerned mostly with revolution. Not infrequently the fighting was of the comic opera variety, wherein both parties battled furiously until the ammunition gave out and then adjourned more or less amicably to the nearest grog-shop. But many

of the frays were bloody, and with natural resources idle and treasury too often looted, Santo Domingo fell heavily into debt. In 1904 it obtained a loan based upon the condition that the United States should take over the collection of the customs in the city of Puerto Plata as security, an arrangement which presently was extended to cover other ports. The revolutions continued, however; creditors grew uneasy; and in 1916 American marines landed (much as they landed in Haiti) to "help establish stable government in order that treaty obligations may be fulfilled."

In many respects, however, the Occupation here differed from that in Haiti.

While it lasted, it was frankly and openly militaristic; the Americans made no pretense of aiding a nominally "independent" government; and when they did withdraw, on July 12th, 1924, they departed with equal completeness. Today a few Yankees remained as collectors of the customs, under a Financial Adviser, but otherwise the republic *was* independent, and the president enjoyed so much actual power that he recently had been able to revise the constitution and vote himself two extra years in his office—a procedure which, in the old days, would undoubtedly have provoked a revolution.

Santo Domingo, however, had learned its lesson. Although the marines had withdrawn, it would be an easy matter for them to come tearing over from Port-au-Prince or Cape Haitien, to reach the Dominican capital within a few hours, and potential insurrectionists now held their

peace. Furthermore, the Dominicans were now carrying on for themselves all the various works of sanitation and road-building which American treaty officials were doing in Haiti, and having more funds at their disposal, they were doing a better job.

The anti-American element in Port-au-Prince often pointed to Santo Domingo's fine roads as proof that American assistance was unnecessary. The concrete drive which unfolded itself before me was a wide and splendid boulevard. But this republic enjoyed a prosperity quite lacking in overcrowded Haiti. On its northern coast were vast sugar estates—a contrast to the tiny squatters' farms found throughout the Haitian jungle. The Dominican Republic also borrowed money for public improvements—it had recently obtained a loan of \$10,000,000 from the National City Bank of New York—and its income, from customs receipts, was far greater than that of the Black Republic. In every way one found this country more flourishing; the wages of common laborers jumped at its very border from forty cents a day to a dollar, or sometimes five dollars; and in the cane-cutting season both Haitians and Porto Ricans came swarming in to profit from high salaries.

This was a very prosperous land—a contrast to poor Haiti.

/ III

I swung on along that fine, wide concrete highway. It was altogether *too* good. There was no shade, and the

tropic sun was frightfully hot. I didn't have to pause this time to boil my water; it fairly simmered in my pocket. . . . I began to wonder whether this hike were worth the trouble.

Walking has its merits, as exercise. If a travel-writer does a bit of it, the critics are apt to hail him as a fellow who really sees and knows the countries he visits. But there's a peculiar monotony about hiking across a desert, without a habitation in sight, and one begins to feel slightly foolish when he marches along a splendid motor-road, with automobiles whirling past him.

This southern coast of Santo Domingo *was* a desert. The fertile valleys which gave it its prosperity were all in the north. And after the thickly-populated Haiti, where one found villages in the most desolate wastes, the uninhabitedness of the Dominican republic was astounding.

I consumed my quart of drinking water most extravagantly, expecting that I'd soon strike some place where it could be replenished. But there was no such place. I hiked on through rolling hills whose only vegetation was a scraggly, dried-up cactus, burned black by the frightful sun. Not a single dwelling relieved the barren landscape.

At some hour of the middle afternoon I stopped for lunch. I had a box of chocolate which I had purchased in Port-au-Prince, and which I believed might serve for just such emergencies as this. But after opening it, I found the delicacy swarming with maggots. The little white worms came riggling and squirming out of it, and surveyed me most impiously. If they had been given fin-

gers by the provident Nature that created them, they would undoubtedly have thumbed their noses at me.

Hungry and thirsty, I stumbled on.

The sunset which eventually fell was gorgeous, in the manner of all desert sunsets. Broad and splendid banners of scarlet and orange filled the sky, flaming over the heavens, and the gulches of the mountains grew deeply purple and black. But where the devil could I spend the night?

As though in answer to my query, a few lamps beamed ahead, from a village of six wooden huts. I stopped to ask for a lodging.

"Usted quiere cama?"

The aged Spanish woman regarded me most suspiciously. White men, in this land where pride was so important, did not ordinarily travel on foot, with a pack upon their shoulders. She regarded me with the distrust suitable to a bandit.

I offered her some money.

"If you don't mind sleeping on the floor, come in."

So I slept that night on plastered mud. The diminutive dwelling was separated into two rooms by a species of blanket which hung from the rafters. Beyond this futile partition the lady and her husband made amorously merry. He seemed to be a very affectionate soul, and I have never found much pleasure in peep-shows. But there was no privacy in *this* establishment; the several pigs and chickens which shared my own half of the dwelling wandered restlessly about throughout the night; and long before the dawn I was glad to rise and hit the trail again.

When another chauffeur stopped beside me to offer passage, I promptly accepted.

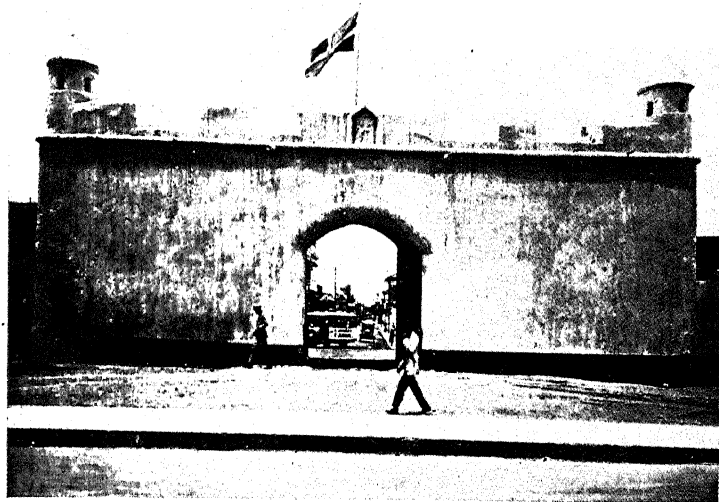
"Usted va Santo Domingo?"

"Yes."

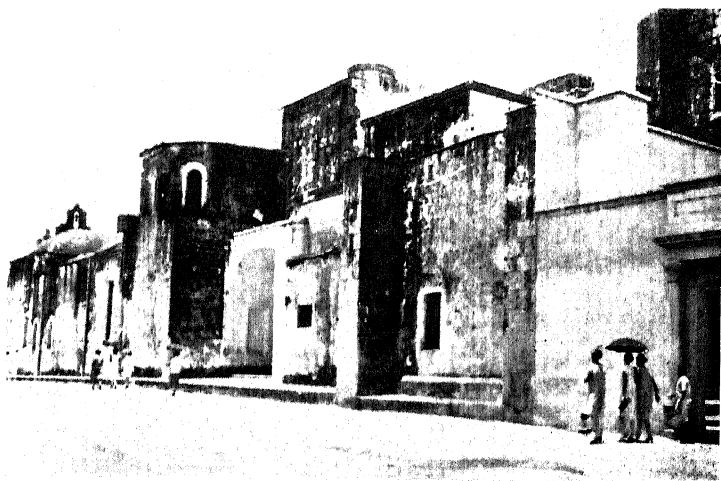
I climbed in, and away we sped, eating up miles of space.

At noon we stopped in a small city called San Juan, a very conventional Spanish city of low and solid houses. The luncheon was also typically Castilian—beans and rice and chicken—but it was decidedly welcome. I helped it down with a bottle of very warm beer. Then we continued. The broad highway itself was magnificent, winding like a stately avenue over the rolling, uninhabited hills; as it neared the Dominican capital, it passed a few wide areas of cane plantation; it swung down to level coastal plains and flattened out across a stretch of many miles without a single curve; and toward nightfall we raced into a fashionable suburb of new homes which looked like palaces after the ramshackle huts of Haiti; then into the narrow streets of the venerable Spanish city, the most historic metropolis upon the Spanish Main.

But even here progress was encroaching. Upon the crumbling fortress-like walls above the modern wharves a sign proclaimed, "Cold Beer." Through the narrow Moorish streets of the ancient stronghold—past ancient gates, past overhanging balconies, past the ruins of age-marked churches—swept countless American motor-cars, the blare of their claxons accentuated as in all old Spanish cities by the narrowness of the streets. And from a



The Bastion de Febrero



The Columbus Cathedral

lurid billboard, directly opposite the hallowed cathedral where Columbus himself now sleeps, a gaudy little Hollywood blond in a fetching one-piece bathing suit, smiled a roguish, vampish, mischievous smile in behalf of the film, "Blind Virgins."

IV

I sat down upon a bench in the shade of the old cathedral, and blinked bewildered orbs.

It was a pleasant little flower-gardened Spanish plaza, the one upon which the cathedral faced. In its center was a statue of the discoverer. And the buildings about it, with the exception of a glaringly new city hall and a couple of modern hotels, were all venerable structures that dated from the Colonial era.

In such a setting one half expected to see a few mail clad knights, or gentlemen in velvet doublets, or some wasp-waisted ladies with starched lace ruffles about their swan-like necks. But the only knights in sight today were those of the blacking-box, who came running from every direction to form an eager, pleading group about me, pointing in accusation at the dust upon my boots.

"Limpia, señor? Limpia?"

The venders of lottery tickets were even more persistent. Varying from tiny babies to old men and women, they waved their handfuls of colored paper in my face, earnestly assuring me that their particular numbers were certain to win the prize. It seemed, particularly on the eve of a drawing, that half of Santo Domingo's popula-

tion was thus engaged in offering riches to the other half.

That drawing occurred always on Sunday morning, on the steps of the House of Assembly, facing Columbus' cathedral. Upon the august veranda then, two silver globes made their appearance, each filled with little pellets that contained the numbers. In the larger globe each pellet stood for a ticket; in the smaller, each for a prize. An eager but silent crowd watched intently as several functionaries whirled the huge balls, and drew forth the numbers, and read them aloud to recorders at an adjacent table.

"Numero doscientos treinta y tres."

"Nada."

I waited in vain, however, for some ragged, barefoot beggar to leap forward with a glad cry, or swoon as he found himself the unexpected recipient of twelve thousand dollars. It was something that had often happened, and might again at any moment. But the big globe, alas, contained hundreds of thousands of pellets, and the prize-globe only a few.

Just what the average Dominican did for a livelihood, while waiting for the happy day when the wheel of fortune might favor him, was something of a puzzle. Dark immigrants from Haiti performed most of the manual labor in this republic. Americans or Canadians operated the banks, the steamship companies, or the mining properties of the interior. Frenchmen, Italians, and Porto Ricans ran most of the hotels. Spaniards, principally Spanish Jews, owned the larger department stores, while

the majority of the smaller retail shops were invariably in the hands of Syrians.

The last, as in Haiti, were especially numerous, and prospered despite the fact that they were violently disliked. In old revolutionary days they were always the first victims to be looted, if not murdered, yet they had thrived even through the persecution, and today their establishments were recognizable from their superiority over those of the few Dominicans who dared compete with them. In place of the gloomy and empty doorways peculiar to most Spanish shops, they splurged on show-windows, always attractively dressed; their stocks were always complete; their prices were extremely elastic; and it was a most determined shopper who, if he once stepped inside, made good his escape without buying *something* from the wily but courteous orientals.

Like his fellows throughout Latin America, the Dominican was scornful of trade. In a few instances he might represent the manufacturers of American automobiles or talking-machines or something equally big and refined—always in a wholesale way, which made him less of a common pedler—but in general those who were not so fortunate as to own some ancestral sugar plantation in the interior gravitated toward the professions or toward politics, much like the upper-class Haitians. But whatever he did do for a living, he managed always to convey an impression of unlimited wealth and equally unlimited leisure.

Throughout the warmer hours of the days the city

appeared to be inhabited solely by males—by tall, raw-boned planters in broad sombreros, or city-bred gentlemen in starched wing-collars and imported straw hats—who greeted one another by embracing upon the narrow sidewalks, and conversed together with that preoccupied Spanish courtesy which forces all other pedestrians who would pass them to step into the gutter.

Along toward evening, however, the womenfolk would begin to emerge. Windows, shuttered against the tropic sun, opened now to disclose the *señoritas* refreshed from a siesta, and powdered for the evening promenade. Others, in groups usually, mingled with the plaza throngs, laughing and chattering with the heightened animation of young ladies who realize that they are being critically and covetously surveyed by many male eyes.

In some cases, they were a trifle dark and a few had hair that curled betrayingly, but they scorned the turbans so typical of Haiti. Instead they wore Parisian chapeaux, or more frequently went bareheaded, carrying dainty parasols. Silk stockings also were much in evidence. And—this also was the more noticeable after the flat-footed gait of Haiti—they walked with a jaunty little swing, so feminine and so intriguing that the Commonwealth of Boston would probably have banned it as indecent.

But their little parade, as in most old Spanish cities, was a very brief affair. As the dusk deepened, they withdrew into their family circles. Then only the menfolk remained, still hugging one another and blocking the

sidewalks, or toasting one another with grandiloquent phrases over a glass of wine in some glaringly lighted café. It had been a great year for the sugar-planters, a very prosperous year. Drouths promised a bad crop for the next season, and would probably bring depression. But why worry about next season?

The Dominican had in his nature the spirit of the happy gambler. He was splurging today on motor-cars unknown among his Haitian neighbors. And throughout the night they raced and raced through the old Moorish streets, with din and racket and tumult.

v

As a mecca for the tourist, Santo Domingo should lead all West Indian cities.

If you come sailing up the Ozama River—as most tourists will—the banks are lined with disintegrating fortifications that date from the days of Columbus. Upon your right is the old Rosario Church, where the discoverer is supposed to have worshipped. On the left is the weatherbeaten Homaje Tower, in which he is supposed (wrongly) to have been imprisoned. You step ashore upon a dock beneath the ruins of a mansion once occupied by Columbus' son, Diego, close to the withered trunk of the old ceiba tree to which Christopher anchored his caravel. And you pass through a picturesque gateway in the city wall built by his brother, Bartholomew.

All Santo Domingo, in fact, overflows with memories of the great explorer, and today the city takes much

pride in the thought that it was once his favorite home. Yet in his early days here, Cristobal Colon, to give him his Spanish nomenclature, had his trials and tribulations. When jealous enemies had undermined him at court, he was summarily seized and shipped back to Spain. And although he succeeded in clearing himself of such charges as the enemies invented—and his son Diego came back to this city as its governor—the great admiral died obscurely in the old country.

When his body was brought back to the Dominican capital in response to his dying wish, the populace paid it scant attention, and it was interred without so much as a monument in the family vault in Santo Domingo's cathedral. With time, however, the deceased Columbus gained in local esteem, and thereby hangs a tale—a tale of the controversy as to where his bones lie today.

Some two hundred years after his death, when Spain was finding Santo Domingo a useless and unprofitable burden, she ceded her share of the island to the French. The Spaniards, however, were by this time loath to part with Columbus, so they dug up a coffin which they believed to be his, and removed it to the cathedral in Havana, from which it was later again transferred to Spain. But in 1877 the priests of Santo Domingo made a most surprising discovery. Digging in the crypt of their own church, they came upon a leaden casket inscribed with the words, "Ill'tre y E'do Varon, D'n Cristobal Colon," or "Illustrious and Noble Gentleman, Mr. Christopher Columbus."

The logical assumption is that the Spaniards had carried away not the body of the Admiral himself, but that of his son, Diego, who had been interred beside him. Both Havana and Spain, of course, were resentful of the new find, proclaiming it a fake and a hoax upon the part of the Dominican priests. But Santo Domingo, which had been so neglectful of the living Columbus, rejoiced exceedingly in its possession of the "genuine" remains. Streets and parks were named after the good Padre Billini whose shovel had unearthed the coffin. Funds were raised for a \$40,000 mausoleum. And Christopher now requiescats in *pax* beneath a handsome marble tomb for the edification of the passing tourist.

At first glance, the Dominican cathedral seems a queer old monstrosity—an ill-assorted jumble of domes and towers—and one scarcely blames Sir Francis Drake, who captured the city in 1586, for having fired the cannonball which is still embedded in the roof. Yet there's a picturesqueness and a fascination about its age-discolored walls; within, it proves one of the most sumptuous and handsome ecclesiastical structures in America; and there's a majesty and dignity in its grand proportions, that makes even a tourist party converse in muted whispers.

To the visitor this is undoubtedly the city's stellar, three-starred sight, but there are also many others. For centuries the Dominicans themselves were neglectful of their ancient landmarks; temples which strangers might travel miles to see were allowed to fall to pieces; historic palaces were deliberately wrecked and carried away,

brick by brick, for the construction of newer buildings. But today, in their passion for modernity, the citizens are beginning to appreciate the value of the old; recent laws protect the colonial relics from the onslaught of vandals; and the government, in addition to publishing illustrated descriptive booklets, has even gone so far as to label each sight with a conventional placard.

There are other churches, some now in crumbled ruins, some comparatively well preserved, which antedate even the cathedral.

Old San Francisco Church, upon a prominent hill, roofless and buried in jungle, is said to have been the first temple in the New World empowered to grant communion. San Nicolas church, still older and also a wreck, once enjoyed the right of asylum and could shelter from prosecution the refugees and criminals who managed to reach its doors. There's scarcely a street—scarcely a block, in fact—which can not boast of another colonial temple, or a patch of ancient wall, while nearly every private home claims some venerable story of murder and intrigue, or cherishes some tradition of conquistadorial treasure buried beneath its floor.

But in this old city, as everywhere throughout the world, progress is apparent.

From the huge old church which once was the convent of the Jesuit friars there sounds a great clicking of typewriters, for the famous old structure now houses the Treasury and a new Department of Public Works. A half block distant from it, one finds three handsome banks,

standing out like palaces among the aged Spanish structures. And if you drop in at the neighboring American consulate to ask for the latest bulletin on exports and imports, you'll be surprised to learn that Santo Domingo's foreign trade is the third largest among the cities of the Caribbean, exceeded this last year only by that of Havana and Port of Spain.

Out beyond the landward bastions—beyond the “27 de Febrero” gate which commemorates in its name the day of the Dominican Republic's independence in 1844—a newer suburb is growing up, a suburb of modern architecture. Splendid avenues here lead past the villas of the wealthier residents—villas whose counterpart might easily be found in any élite residential suburb from Forest Hills (N. Y.) to Beverly (Calif.) After all, a population which has lived for three centuries in the shade of crumbling palaces feels little reverence for them. And the newer homes, though they may fail to charm the visitor, are equipped with palatial features of their own—with garages and bath-tubs and radio sets—of which Columbus and Cortez and Balboa and Pizarro, in their seeking for pomp and power, never even dreamed.

VI

On my plaza bench I sighed sentimentally as I sharpened my pencil and scratched out from my notebook, “redolent of the Colonial era.” Then, having reflected a moment, I put it back the way it was. For the modernity was *not* this Santo Domingo's most notable character-

istic. The truth, it dawned upon me, was that the city was so very redolent of conquistadorial days—so overflowing with reminders of the past—that the inevitable modernity stood out in higher and clearer relief.

In Haiti one found today a modern capital, with wide rectangularly-arranged streets, but a people completely unchanged since the days of Dessalines. In Santo Domingo one found an old, old city, yet one with a very up-to-the-minute population, addicted to pep and progress.

As I loafed in the historic plaza, where mail-clad knights had tramped, an up-to-date motor sprinkler came charging among the flower-beds, wetting gardens and loafers alike. Overhead sounded the zoom of the giant passenger-plane from Porto Rico, as it circled down toward Lindbergh Field. And around the corner came another horde of the omnipresent bootblacks—something you'll never find in the barefoot republic of Haiti—all of them cheering most lustily the most completely modern of gladiators.

"Viva! Viva! Viva el hero del boxeo!"

The hero was still in his tattered bath-robe; his hair was wet and tousled; his knuckles were still in their bandages; and his face was glowing from the recent fray. Gloomily indifferent to his admirers, he strode on through the crowd, glancing neither to right nor to left. Quite possibly he felt ashamed of a city which, although interested in new sports, did not yet support boxing to a degree which enabled its champions to ride home in a

taxi. But his youthful followers seemed very enthusiastic.

"Viva! Viva! Viva el campeon de box!"

And Columbus still slept on. He was merely a hero of the past, and a trifle out of fashion.

CHAPTER XIX

A GLIMPSE OF PORTO RICO

I

THE weekly steamer of the Porto Rico Line, which picked me up at Santo Domingo, was to stop two days at San Juan.

A storm seemed brewing when I embarked; the little launch which took me out to the vessel fairly danced over a series of rolling waves; one had to bide his time as the ships cavorted and tossed, and leap precariously to the ladder; and the doctor, with whom I sat at dinner, predicted a hurricane. We were on the eve of the heaviest blow in recent island history.

II

One would scarcely have believed it.

The big steamer rolled and pitched, but the islands which slipped past were so very sunny and contented.

"They're all uninhabited," explained the doctor. "On this one, I believe, you *do* find a few goats. That next one contains nothing but fleas. What they live on, I don't know. The only party that ever attempted to land there was simply massacred by the pests. Bitten to a frazzle. They just had to run like the devil for their boats and get away from the atoll."

And then came Porto Rico.

For several hours its placid shores drifted past, revealing hills that were cultivated from their base up to the loftiest peak.

"Rich Port," its name meant, and the nomenclature was not inappropriate. From its earliest history, this fertile island had enjoyed a peace most unusual in the West Indies, and also some measure of prosperity. By 1780, when the American Colonies were still in their epochal struggle for freedom, the population of Porto Rico had swelled to 80,000; now it was 1,300,000. And to steal a paragraph from the booklet which my steamship company published:

"For two long centuries the history of Porto Rico was a fair page, marred only by forays of pirates who swarmed the West Indian waters, and by the occasional ineffectual bombardment of the strong fortifications of San Juan by the Dutch and the English. Today the visitor may see in the walls of the old fortress at San Juan the pit-marks of the solid shot hurled futilely against the defenses by the marauding sea-rovers, but although Admiral Sampson also bombarded it in the Spanish-American war, it holds the record of never having hauled down its flag in surrender until by the Treaty of Paris the island became American territory."

III

At first glimpse, San Juan proved less impressive than Santo Domingo.

The fortifications which lined the waterfront, thanks to the natural protection of a reef, had been built comparatively small; they were rambling and discolored, and dominated today by a rusty water-tank. But once past the Morro, the huge old castle which guards the narrow entrance, heavy walls lined the harbor; the Casa Blanca, the "White House," slipped past, and beyond another bastion the big gray palace of the present governor; and my steamer, having rounded another point to a still more landlocked bay, maneuvered toward a city where occasional "skyscrapers" rose from a general level of flat-roofed Spanish dwellings.

It was a queer but fascinating blend of old and new.

On the waterfront stood a massive Federal Building, completely Anglo-Saxon in its solid architecture. Behind it, many cable offices, and rows of impressive banks. Trolley cars clanged constantly through the old Spanish streets, contesting the right of way with countless sight-seeing busses. Ice cream parlors everywhere now catered to Yankee taste, while venders of post cards and curios invited the tourist trade. And upon the principal plaza, among the old Spanish arcades, a seven-story department store, as up-to-date in every respect as the emporiums of New York!

Yet the streets beyond were little changed since the days of Spanish rule. With sidewalks that often challenged the sense of equilibrium of any pedestrian except a professional rope-walker, they zigzagged randomly and

often steeply among ancient buildings; along the way one caught glimpses through arched doorways of pleasant Moorish patios; on balconies the *señoritas* smiled down in the most Castilian fashion. The tongue one heard most frequently was the musical one of Madrid. The signs, even on modern shops, had a Spanish twist of their own. "Atención! Atención! Rialto Beauty Parlor." And Woolworth's local rival was a "Tienda 5 y 10 cents!"

Rambling through the narrow alleys, one stumbled upon many a picturesque church of pastel hue, and many a moss-grown wall or fortress, almost if not quite as old as the ruins of Santo Domingo.

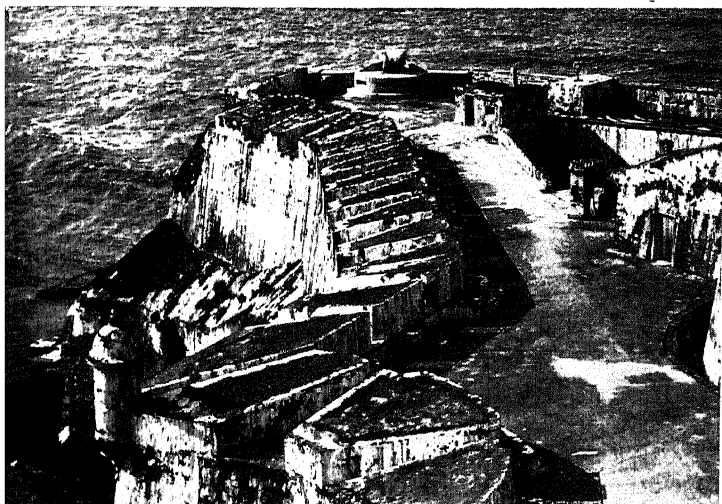
There was the cathedral, squat and ugly, but famous as the resting place of Ponce de Leon—the Water Gate, once the city's official entrance for the armored knights of Spain—the Fortaleza above it, begun in 1529 as part of the defenses, later used as the home of the Spanish viceroys, and now, improved by paint and plumbing, the home of the present governor—the Casa Blanca, equally old, which crowns a neighboring bastion—or the famous Morro, so strong in its day that it baffled all assailants.

Sir Francis Drake, who paid his respects in 1595 with "six of the Queene's shippes" and some twenty-one other vessels, was obliged to withdraw without the "thirty-five tunnes of silver" which the stronghold was reported to guard. Among the others who repeated the attempt were Sir Ralph Abercromby and Admiral Harvey. When Sampson's fleet, searching for Cervera (who was eventually

located at Santiago), called in 1898, he found that the Spaniards had sunk a ship in the harbor and mined the channel entrance, and the few thousand shells he hurled at the fortress were quite without effect.

In general shape, the Morro might be described as triangular, with three tiers of batteries facing the sea, and in its time (according to Ober) it was "a small military town in itself, with chapel, bakehouse, water-tanks, warehouses, officers' quarters, barracks, bombproofs, and dungeons under the sea." Many of the old ramparts are of interest, especially one crumbling sentry-box on the lower sea bastion, from which (according to legend) the sentries frequently disappeared, an odor of brimstone invariably lingering behind them to prove that the devil himself had taken them away. Today the Porto Rican soldiers who guard it seem little troubled by the ghosts of its past; the subterranean dungeons are barred and uninhabited; and its weed-grown walls might prove futile defense against more modern guns. But it still stands out as a colossal monument to the majesty which once was that of Spain.

The Church of San José, on a tiny court of the same name to the east of the Casa Blanca, is said to have suffered more from Sampson's bombardment than the Morro itself, and the padres are usually very courteous about pointing out where the shell hit it. Aside from that, it's one of San Juan's most picturesque old buildings, and a brief detour northward leads to the *Pantheon*, an old Spanish Cemetery outside the city walls, where the poor



Atop the Morro, San Juan



The Fortress San Cristobal

were once interred in a curious tenement-like system of vaults.

A good old-fashioned cemetery, this! One paid his rent by the month; if he failed to come across with the cash, the authorities chucked the bones of his father or his grandfather out upon the beach, to be picked at by the buzzards.

It is mainly out in the suburbs—beyond the dour bulk of Fort San Cristobal, another doughty fortress which once guarded the landward approaches—that modernity is complete.

Here a handsome boulevard leads to Santurce, and other fashionable residential communities, with a hotel rivalling the best in Cuba, and country clubs galore. Along it, mansions and handsome new buildings are springing up with the virility of the proverbial mushroom—a theatre, more clubs, a Y.M.C.A., even a stadium for boxing bouts, and a magnificent new capitol, the city's chiefest pride—and prominent among the rest are many impressive schools.

When this island came into the possession of the United States, only one structure was devoted purely to educational purposes, and less than 30,000 of Porto Rico's 953,000 inhabitants had attended a school of any kind. To-day, it is said, about 230,000 pupils are enrolled, and the island boasts of nearly 2,500 finely built and completely equipped public schools. There has been some criticism, in fact, to the effect that Porto Rico spends far too much on the buildings and far too little on the teaching, but

the Porto Ricans undoubtedly get more from them than the forts which the Spaniards built.

In fact, they feel educated now, and prepared for more self-government. And quite a few of them clamor today for absolute independence.

IV

I was still wandering about the old Spanish streets, jotting down guidebook data, when a native gentleman introduced himself.

He was a pleasing chap, dressed nattily in the stiffly-starched linen characteristic of San Juan. He had seen me making notes; had sized me up as an author; and he was eager to give me his own views. He led me to a speakeasy just around the corner from the congressional building.

"Thees ees very fine place," he said. "All the beeg people come here—the senators, the society man, everybody beeg."

It was not a luxurious joint; it appeared to be a very modest private home, with a table or two in the rear patio; but the liquor served was genuine brandy.

"Yes, we always get good booze here," continued my new friend. "We get better booze than in United States. And we are always very modern. Half our revenue is spent for sanitation. There is not a mosquito on the island. And wherever you poot the nose, you find a school-house."

"You see what progressive place is San Juan? Eet ees more American than your city of Newark! All the people here speak him good the English. You stand at the Plaza Principal, and you theenk you are on cornair of Broadway and Forty-Second Street. And yet we are not per-meet to be a state in the Union!"

This was a sore point with Porto Ricans. How could one blame them? They had not been consulted about the change from Spanish to American rule. Their status *was* indefinite. They ranked as citizens of the U. S. A. but held no statehood. They had a congress of their own, but its legislation was always subject to veto by an American governor from Washington. The system, in fact, was very much similar to that in the British islands, yet it did not inspire the loyalty found among British islanders.

"*Que injusticia!*" my Porto Rican lamented. "We have here not so much right as in Hawaiia. You write him down. I say, as voice of Porto Rico, we have not so much right as in Hawaiia. Hawaiia, carramba, which have not so many population! Hawaiia, which is ninety-nine percent savage! Yes, you write him down like I tell you, and print it for the American public. Hawaiia, which is ninety-nine percent savage." [The figures are *his*, not *mine*.] "Hawaiia, which dress in"—he made a gesture suggesting grass-skirts—"men and women half naked!"

If one listened to the tales of Americans resident in Porto Rico, one heard a different story:

"They're the most ignorant lot of voters in the world," insisted one man. "At the last election one fellow came up and said he wanted to vote for Don José. That was the proprietor of his estate. I asked him, 'for what office do you wish to vote for him?'"

"He considered a moment.

"For 'king,' he said."

They were an unprepared lot, these Porto Ricans. Only a bare few, like my friend whom I'd scraped up on the street, were educated and cultured. He *was* a gentleman.

He called for another brandy.

"The one great trouble here ees prohibition. You write him down. *Aquí no hay andado la prohibición*. It is not success. True, we vote it ourselves." [Porto Rico did precede the rest of the United States in this; the local wets charge that pussyfooters from the U. S. A. came down and deceived the illiterate masses into voting for something they did not want; but the fact remains that Porto Rico now is dry.] "But write him down. Here *la prohibición* ees one great joke. You buy thees good *botelito de cognac* for one dollar, no? And you go into any back room in any café, and you get one quart of rum for fifty cents. Of course, the police are not supposed to permit, but—" He made one of his eloquent Latin gestures, suggesting the counting of bills. "And gambling? That fine club across the street ees gambling club. In twenty-five nice clubs in this city, you gamble so mooch as you wish. And women? Yes, yes, plenty. We are very modern place, you see, so modern as America!"

V

I came back to the *San Lorenzo* to find it securely anchored at the wharf by many heavy cables.

"No," said the doctor, "we don't sail today. The hurricane is coming."

It *came*, by way of the Lesser Antilles, piling up a tidal wave that deluged Martinique, sweeping over Guadeloupe in an orgy of destruction, ravaging the Leewards and the Virgins.

Even when it reached Porto Rico, its fury had not abated. The big ship strained at the hawsers as the blow struck her. One or two of them snapped. The vessel had her steam up, in case it proved necessary to make for sea. But the other stout cables held—there were over twenty of them out—and secure within her hull, we watched the storm from the port-holes.

Stewards scurried about, urging us back.

"That glass may blow in, sir, at any moment. It's captain's orders to stay away from the ports, sir."

But there was too much fascination in the battle of elements outside for complete obedience to such requests. Housetops hurtling! Palm trees falling! The iron roof of a huge shed on the pier beside us rolled up like so much tin, hung fast for a moment, then dropped with a crash upon our forward deck.

A lull followed the first shock, but rain fell in torrents, raging down the sloping streets of the waterfront, and pouring over the wharves in frothing white cataracts. No

tidal wave rose up to engulf us in San Juan's protected inner harbor, but the seas chopped furiously. Many a small boat, insecurely moored, broke loose from the shore, to go bouncing past us. A fairly large cargo-ship not far distant from us was also in serious peril. We learned later that one of its seamen leaped overboard, with a rope tied about his waist, to battle shoreward through the turmoil of waves and driftwood, and to haul up another cable, which fortunately held.

Crash! Crash! Crash!

There was no sleep for the weary. And another dawn revealed the damage. Streets filled with debris! Homes wrecked! Trolley cars lifted from their tracks and piled against garden walls! Many of the big modern buildings had not escaped unscathed. But the old Spanish forts at the harbor-front still stood as they will for ages.

The *San Lorenzo*, the first steamer out, reached New York only one day late, no worse for the experience. Relief ships were already on their way to stricken Porto Rico.

VI

I have no great vital message to deliver in this rambling story of personal experience and observation. Yet, in looking back upon my trip, in an effort to find some message to justify the volume, I find that I think most keenly of the various systems of government found in the West Indies, and of the peculiar results they bring.

The French, in Guadeloupe and Martinique, chum on

terms of comradeship with their black protégés. They leave the islands dirty and unsanitary, yet command the friendship, if not the respect, of the natives.

The English, in Barbados and Trinidad, are absolute rulers, who hold themselves completely aloof from those they rule. They are frankly and honestly so imperialistic that no one questions their authority.

The Americans try to steer a middle course, and make an utter failure of it. Their protégés, in every case, are an alien folk, whose speech, whose thought, whose mode of life, are different from our own. In their adoption by Uncle Sam, they have never been consulted. And no one, however improvident he may know himself to be, quite likes the self-constituted big brother who takes charge of his bank account and says, "Now I'm going to help you, my dear little boy, by spending your money for you."

Our hypocrisy never fools them.

Yet one hears fewer protests from the islanders when relief ships speed to their rescue.

Just previous to *this* storm, a similar hurricane had swept Haiti. It had cut a clean swathe across the island, devastating great areas near Aux Cayes. Rescue ships had been rushed from Port-au-Prince to the stricken territory, as in the case of Porto Rico. And the American officials, so hated in Haiti, had labored day and night to rectify the damage. The story of it is best told in the letter which Alexis wrote, and which reached me some weeks later:

"Sorry I couldn't get to Port-au-Prince to wish you

'bon voyage.' But as you know, we had this damned hurricane. It swept across Aquin and St. Louis and wiped them off the map. It just raised hell with those new roads of mine. Luckily my wife was away on a vacation when it happened. I spent a month, along with the rest of my crew, in the hills, sleeping most of the nights on grave-stones, the only things the blamed wind couldn't knock over. We've still got a big task ahead, building the roads again, and putting up the homes for homeless natives. Apologies for not writing to you sooner. But you know how it is. We're a mighty busy lot when emergencies happen down here."

THE END

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